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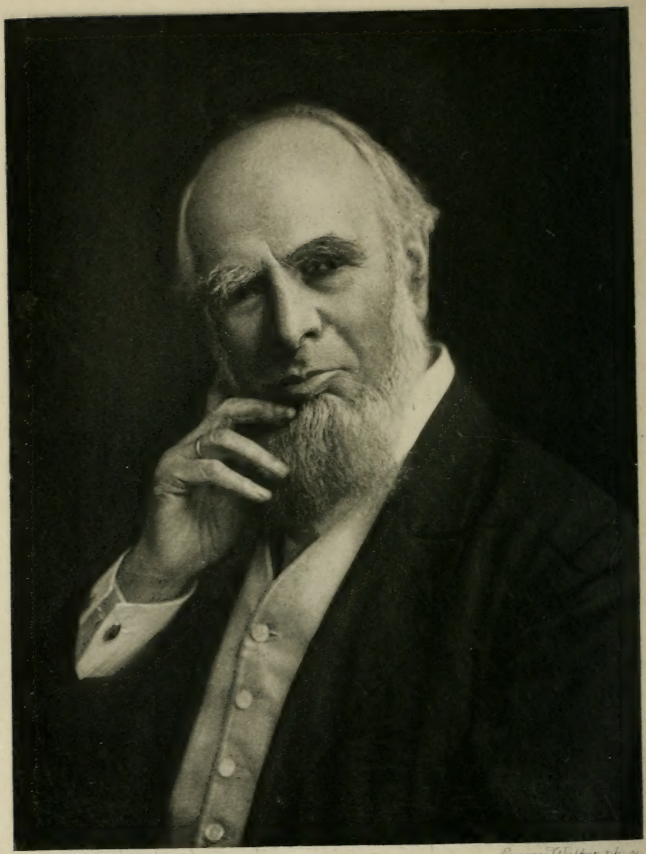
The Manse of Ord,
Banff, N.B.

THE DIARY
OF A CHURCH-GOER

With the wretched I wander,
My life is uncleanly,
I yield to temptation
And drink at the tavern;
Yet in the still footpaths
Of thought I adore thee,
In the filth of my vices
I kneel down to praise thee;
For I love thee, my gladness,
My life, my salvation!

W. W. Story.



Elliott & Fry photographers Emery Walker ph. sc.

Leonard Courtney

THE DIARY OF A CHURCH-GOER

BY

LORD COURTNEY OF PENWITH

WITH A PREFACE

BY

THE DEAN OF EXETER

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
1918

First Edition 1904
Reprinted 1905, 1918

TO

My Wife

WITHOUT WHOSE CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT

AND AID THESE PAGES WOULD NEVER

HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

FOREWORD

In reissuing this book I must say a word about the name which now, for the first time, appears on its title-page. In answer to questions my Husband more than once said that his friends might do what they liked about revealing the authorship of the Diary after he was gone. Many have expressed this wish and it is also my own.

I am told that some of the changes he desired in the Services of the Church are now allowed by Convocation: such as a new arrangement of the Lectionary and the Psalter, and the substitution of the two Christian Commandments for the ten Hebrew ones at the beginning of the Communion Service; and that points are raised

in regard to passing conditions which have altered since the words were written some fourteen years ago. But the two main problems with which the Diary deals can never be out of date, and perhaps never be fully and unanimously answered. His frank, sincere and reverent discussion of them has, I know, helped some fellow-seekers ; and it is in the hope that it may help others and hinder none that I send out this little book on a new journey.

Kate Courtney of Penwith.

15 *Cheyne Walk.*

PREFACE

It is about thirteen years since—soon after its publication—I first read the *Diary of a Church-goer* with deep interest. I did not know who was the writer, and, later on, during the years in which I enjoyed Lord Courtney's friendship, I was still ignorant of the authorship; it was not until after his death that I learnt the secret.

Of course—being myself an "orthodox" churchman—I do not profess or pretend to agree with all Lord Courtney's opinions. But it is remarkable that, so far as the Church services are concerned, he expresses, I believe, the thoughts and feelings of a very large number of Church people. The recital of the Fourth Commandment, for instance, in the Communion Service has been a stumbling-block to many

Churchmen ever since the days of Chillingworth, and is, perhaps, one cause of the un-Christian Sabbatarianism which so long afflicted this country. So, too, in the matter of the use of the Psalms and the "Quicunque Vult" he certainly represents a great body of Church opinion.

But, when we come to his theological views, it may fairly be asked—"Is there room in the English Church for men of the type of the author of this book?" I venture to think that there is. It would, I believe, be an evil day for the Church if it wished and tried to exclude thinkers so earnest, reverent, and sincere as Lord Courtney. It is true, indeed, that men of this type are, more and more, withdrawing themselves from the services of the Church, to the injury both of the Church and of themselves, but my hope is that the wider circulation of this book may help to induce some of them to "consider it again," and to hesitate before they entirely cut themselves off from public worship. For, indeed, we must protest against the notion that men can only worship together when they are completely agreed in their religious views,

and, as a fact, the English Church, while holding and proclaiming the faith expressed in the ancient creeds of Christendom, has always been content to include in her fold many whose opinions differed widely from her own official standards. Such an one was the writer of this book; a man of deeply religious mind who belonged to the company of those who, in every age—while separated in many respects from the orthodoxy of their day—have nevertheless clung to the old spiritual homes; still in heart, at any rate, among "the faithful"; worshipping, it may be (as our author says), "in the outer court of the Gentiles," but still worshipping "in spirit and in truth."

H. R. GAMBLE.

EXETER.

I CANNOT send forth this new edition without an accompanying word, though the shortness of the time since the issue of the first edition might fairly excuse the absence of any such preface. A few sentences will, however, suffice. I desire to express my warmest sense of the friendly spirit toward myself manifested by all my critics, public and private, named and unnamed. Though most have differed from my conclusions, and some very widely, no one has indulged in an ungenerous word respecting the method or conduct of my argument. I hope they will show their kindness further by forgiving me if I do not examine their own objections and suggestions. The

differences between myself and them turn in the main on the conclusions which should be drawn from data little in dispute, and I think no advantage would arise from a comparative examination of such differences. Had I to write my Diary afresh, a phrase or two here and there might be modified, but I have seen no reason requiring a substantial change in it. I would add one more sentence. Any attempt to fit the great fact of the Christian Church into what may be called the natural history of man is a bold undertaking ; and no solution of the questions I have discussed can be free from difficulties. Each of us for himself must, in the light of the reasoning conscience, accept that conclusion which gives him the best promise of truth.

1905

Going, as I do, week after week to church, and not being overmuch jostled there by a throng of fellow-worshippers, my mind has abundant opportunities of moving freely among the subjects presented to it for thought. Some results of the discursive meditations thus originating are recorded in the following pages. I am persuaded that nothing here set down has not been thought before. It has been indeed expressed as well as thought, and the greater part has doubtless been written and printed. It could not well be otherwise. For countless generations men have occupied themselves as to their relations with the past and the future, and have sought to connect themselves with the Unseen and the Unknown;

and though habit, tradition, and authority have fettered their speculations on such questions the more tightly because of the greater importance of their issues, yet there never have been wanting sincere and courageous souls who have faithfully pursued what appeared to them to be lines of truth. It is to be expected that every possible thought should thus have been forestalled. Yet the points of view of men change from generation to generation, and the things which are everlasting are seen under different lights and with different colours. I shall be content if, amid a mass of commonplace, something may now and then be discerned which shall find acceptance because it shall have somewhat of the air of unborrowed things.

It will be at once apparent to the professional reader that I am not learned in relation to the matters on which I have written. I am but a

simple citizen, moving among the mass of my fellow-men as one of themselves, destitute of erudition or any other special claim to their attention. I would, however, patiently plead that I am not therefore completely disqualified from thinking and believing. The late Lord Shaftesbury once protested against being overborne by the tyranny of Professors, and in this respect I would claim to stand by his side. The everyday man has his life and his fate, and the things concerning his peace must be understanded of him as well as by the learned. "Unto the poor the gospel is preached" was said in old time, and the religion of which this cannot be said must forfeit all claim to respect as a message to humanity. Esoteric beliefs are the caves and hiding-places of men who are afraid of daylight. Those who through many hindrances have at last obtained audience of their fellow-men have taken their stand upon platforms seen and known of all, and in

their deliverances have kept back nothing as too precious to be communicated to the multitude. As a counterpart to their teaching must be the capacity of the multitude to receive and understand what is spoken unto them.

No name is found on the title-page of this volume. This is a fact which may seem to require justification, and I may be excused if I say a word or two in explanation of it. First and foremost, I am a mere man of the world, moving easily among my fellows, and making no claim to be unspotted. For such a one to publish his diary as a church-goer is to invite observations which I do not desire. I remember Sir Richard Steele's Christian Hero, and as I cannot emulate his careless simplicity I would ask to dispense with the amusement of the town. In our own days, if not in our own generation, a Duke of Somerset, who had occupied a place in many Cabinets, manifested,

in the retirement of age, the family characteristic of the Seymours by putting forth a Minute, disposing in the briefest compass of the most venerable credentials of Christian history and of the most difficult and disputed articles of Christian doctrine. Admiration for the complete independence of the man, and sympathetic respect for the spirit that led him to turn into such by-paths of thought out of the noisy and dusty highways of political life, were mixed with an ever-intrusive sense of something incongruous and ludicrous in the summary method of his writing. The world paid little attention to this brochure except to remark how oddly the spirit of the "proud Duke" and of King William's Sir Edward reappeared in the quiet authority of its brief pages. Apart from what may be the feeble wish to avoid the pleasantries of comment, I desire to retain the easy companionship of my fellows. Social usage will kindly overlook many

things provided they are not obtrusively pushed forward. A man may think what he likes as long as he keeps it to himself, and he may even abstain from doing what others generally do without much notice being taken of his omissions. When, however, he insists upon publishing his thoughts, and even calls attention to his eccentricities, he becomes an uncomfortable fellow. He carries about a certain atmosphere of silence with him, and he finds that his neighbours avoid in their conversation anything that may, even remotely, touch on what are regarded as his peculiarities. The shelter of anonymity is a sort of petition to be spared these inconveniences. I ask for something of the immunity which a writer in a newspaper possesses, who can exchange his bantering talk over the dinner-table or in the smoking-room with a friend whom he has pulverised in the morning, and who is indeed aware that he ought to be mere dust and ashes. I am a church-

goer, but I do not wish that to be regarded as all my character. My opinions may in some things run farther than some of my neighbours' do, but I would have them not remember it. Enough, and perhaps too much, about an anonymity as to which the world may well be supremely indifferent.

THE second Sunday in Lent brought us again, as it does every spring-time, the story of the deception of Isaac. I do not know that I ever heard it read with more indignation, but the indignation of to-day is somewhat different in character from what it was in earlier years. Then the craft of Rebecca and the smooth falsehood of Jacob excited my anger. I do not condemn these things less heartily now, but there is added to my anger a strong resentment against the dominant belief of the story that a gift obtained by fraud can never be withdrawn, and that the course of life is irrevocably fixed by some Power that registers an act without taking regard of its

Reading Old Testament history.

motive and meaning. The pitiful thing is not only that poor Isaac was deceived, but that he thought himself helpless, that the wiliness of his son had secured an unalterable success, that in the solemnity of his blessing the deceit which obtained it was drowned and lost, and that though Jacob had come as a liar and a thief he had been blessed and must be blessed. As a mere study of the history of law and of morality all this is extremely interesting ; and if it were so presented to the world, the story of Rebecca's successful plot would be an instructive example of archaic thought. Unhappily it is not so put before us. Much of the education of church-going lies in the hearing of readings from the Law and the Gospels, and in such an instance as we had this morning this is turned to a mischievous instead of a useful result. If the

clergy would only give us, at not too distant intervals, sermons on the true method of reading the Old Testament! We know from the life of Jowett that he long entertained the notion of writing an essay on the subject; but this remained one of his unfulfilled plans. Perhaps he would have given a cue to his brethren which is sadly wanted. As it is, almost every one of them twists and warps his mind with the feeling that Jacob must be justified, and that a belief in the validity of a promise stolen against the mind of the giver was simply an illustration of supreme piety. I heard one the other day admit that every schoolboy liked Esau better than Jacob, and we were left to understand that he agreed with the schoolboy; but he got rid of Esau by remembering that St. Paul had called him a profane person, and so went on

his way. I cannot measure the wrong that is done by this way of reading and teaching. It leaves the national mind falsely educated touching the foundations of morality and the obligations of contract. We are familiar with the pious tradesman who sands his sugar and goes to prayers. Lately we have been hearing not a little of the slimness of the Boers. Deceit will manifest itself only too often among all races and under all forms of education. But I protest that I only wonder that we do not encounter more pious frauds and more slimness than we do in every-day life. We have to thank the rougher and semi-heathen morality of secular thought for correcting the false standards which are allowed, if not approved, under church methods. Nine clergymen out of every ten, if they speak at all about him, excuse Jacob, and

will think Isaac had no choice after his blessing had been once given. Yet our courts of law show us that a promise extracted by fraud is of no validity, persons being habitually relieved from them in relation to property, and the apparently most binding contract of marriage itself being quashed when a party to it was throughout acting under deceit. If we read the story as we ought, as a most intensely true presentment of a piece of old-world history, a frank denunciation of the trickery of Rebecca and Jacob would at once accompany it; and it would be pointed out how the narrator of the story had no more outgrown than Isaac himself the primitive notions of the eternal obligation of act apart from intention. The true morality requires that Isaac should at once have withdrawn the defrauded blessing,

and indeed something on the other side might pardonably be evoked upon Jacob as a punishment of his craft.

An old sermon by Colenso.

I have said not one clergyman in ten will possibly condemn Jacob; but I must recall an exception which lives in my memory. It happened long ago. Colenso, then a parish priest in Norfolk, came up to preach before his University, and he selected the deceit practised upon Isaac as the text of his sermon. His condemnation of Rebecca and Jacob left nothing to be desired. It glowed with the honest fervour of a fine nature. I do not remember that he had anything to say about Isaac's acceptance of the unalterable endurance of a stolen blessing. He added, however, an observation which I recall as exhibiting the simplicity of his belief as then held. He

suggested that most of us probably thought that Jacob was a mere stripling on the borders of manhood who might be excused if he could not withstand the authority of his mother ; but he told us that if we examined the marginal figures in our Bibles we should find that Jacob was at least seventy years old. It was evident that no suspicion of Archbishop Usher's chronology, still less of the punctual historical accuracy of the book of Genesis, had then entered Colenso's mind. The Bishop's name leads to another observation. Without openly saying it, the clergy as a whole, at least all educated clergymen, now accept his arithmetical inquiry into the Pentateuch as sound, but think it no matter. When Colenso's book first appeared, Matthew Arnold, with that superciliousness which was the caricature of his character,

deprecated as foolish and even mischievous the publication of criticism which the wisest had long since tacitly accepted. He looked upon Colenso as a simple, ignorant fellow, who had stumbled upon a discovery familiar to men of culture, and had inconsistently blurted it out without considering how it might upset the beliefs of the vulgar. It may be that, in a similar spirit, some reader of what I have been saying about the urgency of an outspoken condemnation of Jacob's fraud, and of an equally outspoken correction of Isaac's superstition, may say that this kind of criticism savours of a narrow Puritanism from which a liberated intelligence should escape. I am firmly convinced of the contrary. Whether I am right or wrong must depend upon what is the true measure of current morality among English-speaking

people ; and my own plea is that this grievously suffers from the manner in which the Scriptures are read, and the lessons implicitly or explicitly drawn from them. Upon this issue I face judgment.

The Song of Zacharias, its victory.

THE choir to-day sang divinely the Benedictus. I know not whose version it was of the Song of Zacharias; and indeed many men have clothed its words in worthy music. It began with a great burst of thanksgiving for the visitation and redemption of man—a united chant of glory and praise—and then passed into a non-restrained but grave and equable recital of grateful recollection of the promise and progress through past ages. A tenor took up the congratulation of the forerunner who was to tell of the yet greater grace that was to descend upon us. The same voice chanted the welcome of the day-spring from on high, and, finally, the united choir fell into a serene

note of tender meditation over the victory that dispelled darkness, reduced to nought the terror of death, and guided our feet into the paths of peace. An old friend of mine told me years ago, in view of the ceremony that was coming into our services, that she was too old to take up with the new fashion in religion. There are doubtless habits, fashions, ways of thinking, as much as modes of speech and symbolic movements, which change from generation to generation. In my boyhood we rarely heard of the Benedictus. It was in the Prayer-book, doubtless, but practically never said or sung. Nowadays it is re-accepted in use, and may be preferred to the Hundredth Psalm, which in old versions, and new versions, and Prayer-book versions has perhaps become worn a little threadbare ; nor is this surprising, for the Benedictus surely expressed

the essence of all religion. The coming of God to man, the unveiling of perfect holiness, the vision of purity and of unbroken harmony, the light that enters in and spreads and floods our being, the great victory and peace which are the final outcome of the revelation of this newer and higher life—is not all this under all forms of creed the expression of hope in believing which is the joy of pious souls? And is not the hymn of praise which St. Luke gathered into his Gospel one of the noblest as well as one of the simplest of Credos? The hypercritical sense may perhaps detect some little note of Hebrew *particularismus* in the God of Israel, but this vain feeling disappears like a bubble on the stream as soon as it is formed. Note, too, the victory over death as the real attestation of faith. Death is the horror of the natural man. Whatever it may

mean, whatever may follow its horror, is lost as we are lifted into light.

(After some days.)

Is it all a dream?

But what if this illumination in which we are steeped, giving us a pure vision of things pure, and a new supremacy over things evil, and Death, the most implacable of them, be but another delusion, one more instance of the blind hopes of self-deceiving man? We make gods after our own image. So it has been in the past. Must it be so for ever? The early vision of a fell tyrant, sullen and severe and all-devouring, whom we would lull to inactivity, perhaps to sleep, by pitiful gifts, and by forestalling through self-torture the penalties of his malignity, may have disappeared. He was the exaltation of the enthroned brute of too common experience. Nor can we now

endure the presentment of the inflexible Judge who plays fast and loose with the requirements of His own law, and is content with the equity of releasing one offender from punishment because another who has not offended has taken it wholly upon himself. A just man cannot tolerate this make-believe of justice ; and, as men change, the God of men changeth also. Is our last vision of light breaking in upon us, struggling with darkness, growing from dawn to morn, and from morn to perfect day, only another stage of man's development, in which the unfolding from within is sought to be associated with light and life from without ? Is not the assurance of victory over Death a test-illustration of delusion for those who are sincere and strong enough to refuse to be deluded ? What answer have I to these questions ? I accept the physical fact of Death without

abatement, perhaps with more fulness than is common, but of this I must write another day. Death with his silence is before us all. So is Evil. Injustice and cruelty rage about the world. Who can dare to examine the dark places of his own life? Still, be it from without or from within, be it born of evolution or of visitation, I am from time to time possessed with the belief—and the recurrent times are points of real existence emerging into recognition—that Evil is the shadow and Good the substance, that there is a certain promise of a fulfilled order in the glory of which Death is vanquished. Let this be called faith. I know no calculus which is able to measure the elements of such a conviction. Perhaps all that can be said is that here I stand and here I am. The first and last word of proof is that I am on standing ground.

"Do we move ourselves or are moved?"

What other answer can be given to that other question which is involved in what I have written? Am I an automaton, every movement of which is predetermined by circumstances requiring and compelling it to take place, or have I any measure of co-operation, any faculty of choice, any freedom of personality enabling me to change, control, direct my action? Every addition we make to our knowledge of the external world is added testimony to the unbroken sequence of identical principles in the movement of the Universe. Chance is but another name for our ignorance, and as our ignorance disappears the realm of chance is contracted. Astronomy and geology together give us in the experience of to-day the experience of countless generations; and every man who is concerned with these or any other science assumes principles of con-

tinuity and identity as the basis of his thoughts. The physical life of man proceeds on like immutable lines. The genesis of a personality may be an unsolved and insoluble secret ; but every stage in the life of the structure in which the personality is clothed is ordered by principles as continuous and immutable as those to which dead nature is subject. The question may well come with increasing force, " Is not the will also overset in like manner by unchanging conditions ? " The Master said, " The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But however conclusive may have been the analogy to unawakened Nicodemus, it must make some of us sadly ask whether the lesson must not be inverted. We know that

there is no caprice in the movement of the wind. We cannot tabulate the facts, we cannot measure the forces, we cannot bring under one computation all the factors concerned in the phenomenon; but just as surely and as certainly as we can foretell an eclipse of the sun or the moon, so can we in the scientific imagination work out predictions of the strength and force of the wind. Must we then say that it is even so with the Spirit? If the conclusion were irresistible it would at least bring this thought also, that there was nothing arbitrary in the spiritual endowment of a man; but, as I apprehend, the question admits of no final answer as men reckon answers final. Every one for himself comes at last to this, "Here I am, and thus I move." It is from the nature of things impossible that he should get behind his begin-

nings to trace himself from the moment that he was not.

The test of hypothesis.

In the purest and surest of the sciences what is the sum of our knowledge and belief? Man is found gifted with a faculty of observing the phenomena about him; as year after year passes by he takes note of unchanging sequences, or of sequences that change in an ordered succession. The very words order and sequence betray indeed the afterthoughts of a cumulated observation, and must be associated with another body of facts within man's experience, to wit that his own actions are followed by consequences peculiar and attributable to each of them. The suggestion that phenomena in ordered succession, not consequent upon his own action, must be attributed to the action of Another early occurs to

the primitive man. We may discard the notion of personality which is involved in this attribution ; but the highest scientific achievement still consists in the discovery of some principle which will connect and explain the ordered sequence of the greatest number of phenomena. When one principle is found not only to explain the phenomena noted before the suggestion of it arose, but to give a clue to the occurrence of phenomena not before observed, still more when it enables us to predict that with a certain change of circumstances certain novel phenomena will emerge, and the prediction is verified on being put to the test of experience, we have a genuine conviction that we are on the path of truth, and we recognise with delight what we rightly call the Genius who suggested the principle which proves to be the key of so

many mysteries. It is thus that we are enabled to affirm with certainty the identity of the laws of matter, of motion, and of light, not only over our terrestrial globe and in the solar system, but throughout the realms of space; and we may add, seeing that we observe to-day not only what is happening, but what has happened at indefinitely varying periods in the past, in the realms of time also. If we apply the same method to the story of spiritual life, are we unduly bold in saying that the hypothesis proves itself which most simply explains the largest number and the greatest variety of phenomena? Under all the civilisations of to-day, in all the records of the past, we find traces, sometimes, it must be admitted, very obscure, sometimes growing to an embracing fulness, of an enlightenment leading man upward into a higher, purer, and

more sufficient existence. The capacity is everywhere ; it is incited by education ; and if we are sometimes dismayed by the apparently hopeless level where great masses of humanity live and move, we may be sustained by the thought of the long stretches of time man's history is now known to cover, compared with which our generations and even our centuries of complacent civilisation dwindle to narrow limits. Everywhere man grows, and each one of us who claims something of free-will in himself seems bound to admit something of an Influence out of himself which he often resists, but in the leading of which is found the highest peace. Self-knowledge and history combine to support Matthew Arnold's phrase, "Something not ourselves making for righteousness." The same thought is found in the admissions of Huxley's Romanes

Lecture as I read it. It seems to penetrate the past; it inspires us in facing the future. It encourages us to chant with Zacharias, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people"; and it is in the strength of this apprehension that I repeat as the central article of my creed somewhat varied from the usual formula :—

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who speaks by the prophets.

Sunday or Sabbath? The declaration at the altar.

We had an excellent sermon today, which may perhaps be interpreted as equivalent to a sermon with which I found myself in large agreement; but it left me at the end somewhat wondering as to the exact position of the preacher. The sermon was on the observance of Sunday. The view presented to us was free, liberal, and rational. The advantages bodily, mental, and spiritual of a periodical cessation from industrial, commercial, and professional life were insisted upon; but not only were works of charity and necessity allowed, but such an amount of work, limited and reduced, as may be convenient to satisfy the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The Jewish

notion of an inflexible observance of a ceremonial law apart from conditions of reason justifying it was altogether repudiated, and we had instead the sketch of a Sunday conceived in the spirit of the declaration, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." All this was intelligible and just, but I could not help remembering that, a few minutes before, the priest had stood at the altar and declared to us, "God spake these words and said," and thereafter had repeated the fourth commandment in the literal completeness of the Book of Exodus. In what sense could a man with the opinions explained in the sermon use the words pronounced at the altar? How indeed can Christians as a whole repeat the commandment of Moses if they understand the saying of Christ? The inconsistency is a standing

inconsistency, and the particular illustration of to-day was only a more jarring instance of it because of the lucidity of the preacher's discourse. I know it will be said that the repetition of the commandments is of historical value, and I may be told that the Puritans had no difficulty in verbally accepting the fourth, since they managed to throw Christ's emancipating principle into the background and practically forgot it. My sympathy with the Puritans leads me to be uneasy under this plea of historical user. It is another illustration of the mischief we all suffer in having to accept an unrevised service possessing so many points out of harmony with our real convictions. I do not find fault with priests, but I do groan, and I do not believe my feeling is overstrained, at the injury which is done them and done us through the constant necessity of

accommodating ourselves to language repugnant to our thoughts. A plain and, I should think, an acceptable way of removing this difficulty might be found in the adoption of a suggestion borrowed from the version of the Prayer-book used by the Anglican Church in the United States. If the Decalogue has been said on a Sunday—for example, in an early Communion Service—the priest is at liberty to substitute for it in the later service of the day the summation of the commandments given by Christ himself:—

> Hear, O Israel: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

And to this declaration the people reply with a simple Kyrie. This

substitution of Christ's words for the Mosaic Decalogue is indeed only permissible under strict conditions in the American Prayer-book, and it is long since I have had an opportunity of testing its use ; but I believe the substitution has been generally accepted whenever allowable. Why should we not go further and sanction an unqualified option to use the words of Christ as an alternative to those of Moses ? It would be assuredly a relief to many tender souls ; but who can hope that Parliament would pass an Act about which it could not be certainly affirmed that the clergy desired it. I wonder what the Bench of Bishops would say if some lay Lord presented a Bill giving the priest the suggested option ?

If these pages should ever be stumbled upon hereafter—say some fifty years hence—what will the chance reader be apt to think of what I last wrote in them? In that future time the present usage may still prevail, though it seems to me more probable that there will have been a change. The toleration of unbelief has its limits. The spirit must chafe under the ligaments that bind it and burst them asunder. If so, my imaginary reader may smile at the squeamishness of the man dead and gone who strained at such small gnats whilst swallowing camels; or he may feel a pained surprise that it should ever have been necessary to plead for a liberty into which he himself had

The Psalms, optional selection.

been born. It is this latter reader to whom I would fain stretch out a hand of greeting, and whose counterpart to-day I should like to conciliate. Tender, affectionate souls love the circumstances amid which their lives are led; the emotions of their hearts clothe with the glamour of beauty the accidents of time and place accompanying their deepest experiences, and they cannot bear the suggestion of a change which would in truth remove a hindrance from the fuller development of their being. They cling with passionate attachment to habits and customs which their children by and by regard as intolerable—children who in their turn will fondly idolise the circumstances and accidents of their own lives. I am too well aware how many will shrink at the suggestion of a liberty of change in the Communion Service though it be only the per-

missive use of the words of Christ for the words of Moses. Dare I hope for greater tolerance of a suggestion touching the reading of the Psalms? Here also I go no further than an option, and, I will add, an option I should only occasionally use if I were parson of a parish. It is that instead of the necessity of reading the Psalms of the day any selection of Psalms might be made out of the Psalter. There is no part of the service I regard with greater affection than the chanting of the Psalms, and I habitually accept the order of the varying day without desire of change. Yet we must all admit that the Psalms differ from one another in the beauty of holiness, and if some climb to heights that have never been exceeded, some do not rise above a prosaic level, and some—very few—are repugnant to the Christian spirit as songs of a

vindictive and passionately hostile temper. The alliterative Psalms, again, appear to me rather in the light of frozen conceits. A reader who comes across an acrostic in verse is not apt to find much inspiration there; the extremely artificial structure of the poem forbids its being poetical, and it is well if we simply smile at the wasted ingenuity of the author. I confess for myself that these alliterative Psalms always betray the character of their formation. If in the English version the 119th Psalm had each of its first eight verses beginning with A and the next eight beginning with B, and so on, the simplicity of the conceit would mar our appreciation of the result. It is a more serious matter when we think of the cursing Psalms. It was reported the other day of a dignitary just deceased that he had refused to read these Psalms in the regular order of

service until the present[1] Archbishop of Canterbury, on being appealed to, ordered him to read them. I know not if this story is true. If the statement is one of historical fact I can only regret that the clergyman in question did not persist and face the result. I doubt if it would have been dreadful, and if he had suffered the worst—whatever that may be—it would have been the strongest argument for allowing us of right the liberty of selection and omission he had exercised out of his own discretion. The reasons so far suggested for the change may not be persuasive, and it is unskilful advocacy to put them first. Another argument remains. Every one appreciates the advantages of the liberty of choosing the hymns to be sung during the services. It is not merely or chiefly the variety thus offered; the great

[1] Now (1904) the late.

gain lies in the power of choosing hymns appropriate to the season or to some contemporary event occupying the minds of men; or to the motive of the sermon, to which the hymn may be a fitting prelude, or, as frequently in dissenting chapels and occasionally in the service of the Church, a triumphant close. Who has not been conscious of the gain in the life and movement of a service thus secured by appropriate hymns. On fit occasions the Psalms might be used in the same way as a collection out of which might be chosen those most befitting the accompanying circumstances. The principle of selection is sanctioned by the Proper Psalms for Christmas and other great days; nor need there be any fear of an abuse of the power on the part of the clergy. Most of them, even if they had the liberty of variation, would probably agree to the

customary round, but a variation restricted in range to the Psalms of the Psalter should present no difficulties, whilst it would free some from chains they find galling, and would give a liberty which is the first characteristic of real life.

Their power and associations; differences in versions.

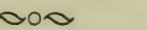
I am ashamed of the poverty of what I wrote the other day about the Psalms. The simplest gratitude should have inspired a deeper acknowledgment of an ever-recurring debt. In how many moods, and under what varying circumstances, have they not been sources of strength! It would sometimes seem as if no one could be taken at hazard which did not yield some delight before it was finished. I know indeed the temptation to idolatry which comes of repeated use. I must, for example, confess that when I speak of the Psalms I

have in my mind the Prayer-book version, and when, as happens now and then, I come across the Bible translation, whether in the Old Authorised Version or the New, I have a jarring sense of any variation I may encounter, even though I know it is more faithful, and may be compelled to admit on reflection that it is equally beautiful. Doubtless an honest Scot, to whom the Prayer-book version is an unfamiliar thing, would resent the phrases to which I cling as defacing the beauty, the perception of which had grown with his growth. This attachment to words is, I fear, idolatrous. Not that I would have it always so branded. Two or three years ago I was turning over Professor Cheyne's book on the Psalms, and when I found his version of the 90th beginning "Lord, thou hast been unto us an asylum from age to age," I was constrained for a time

to put away the book altogether. The shock was indescribable. It seemed mere wilful trifling thus to alter language venerable and beautiful in itself, and made more venerable and more beautiful by its association, by its use in the liturgy of the dead. In this case intolerance of change seems more than pardonable. There are, however, other and graver reasons for recognising the duty of discrimination in our appreciation of the Psalms. As I have said, they vary greatly among themselves. A collection of poems written by many authors, probably in many centuries, must needs betray diversities of inspiration ; and the artificial structure of some of the Psalms leads to a corresponding flatness of thought and feeling. It must be admitted also that most of us—at least I freely admit it for myself—are habitually in danger of being misled by that common

notion of our childhood that the Bible is one book, into importing into the Psalms inspirations and beliefs borrowed from the Gospels and the Epistles. The question whether there is any intimation of man's immortality to be found in the Psalms may excite astonishment and indignation ; yet if we search them by themselves we cannot point to any express confession of the Christian's profoundest belief. If this is incontestable it reveals what must honestly be called a terrible limitation in the range of the Psalmists. And yet in spite of this, and in spite of positive blemishes which may more offend as being more forced on our attention, I cannot sufficiently extol the beauty, the depth, and the nobleness of the aspirations which, breathing from human hearts across distant ages, raise the hearts of men to-day above the low, the mean, and the

transitory to the highest meditations on Eternal Righteousness.



The Psalms and the Koran.

If any one wishes to obtain, in however poor a fashion, some measure of the height and depth of the Psalms, it might be recommended to read them side by side with the Koran. There is indeed something ungracious in all valuations by comparison, since they seem to lead us irresistibly to disparage one in appraising another. But it indicates no small estimate of the Koran that it should be mentioned in this connection. Some would be shocked if I proposed the comparison to them. Yet there is a kind of parallelism between the two collections. The best part of the Koran consists of ejaculations and meditations of a true piety, and the Sudras which embody historical tradition are not unlike in motive those

triumphant chants in which the children of Israel expressed their thanksgiving for their miraculous past. An English or Scotch reader must indeed confess in candour how difficult he finds it to institute a fair comparison between the two books. We approach the Koran without anything of that glamour of association which makes the bulk of the Psalms so beautiful, so dear, and without that unnoticed teaching of long years of habit, thought, and feeling which causes us to pass over and forget—at all events to treat as non-existent—expressions of tribal vindictiveness, and to dwell only on the longings, aspirations, and praise in which Jew and Gentile are at one in the presence of the Eternal. None of this affection conducts us through the Koran. Moreover, it must be admitted that to the English reader it is an unlovely and difficult book. I tried Sale many times and

found it impracticable. Rodwell is easier; though it is lamentable that an English clergyman familiar, as one would think, with the language of the Bible, should render a book of cognate thoughts in the grievously inadequate dialect of modern England. Against these defects it might be suggested that the Koran has at least one advantage in that it contains the most complete expression of that belief in a future life in which the Psalms are deficient. But the vision of the Paradise of Mahomet is a revelation of the worst fault of his book. What is vital in it are its meditations on the compassion and power of God; and its exhortations to men towards truth, equity, and mercy, which may be too ineffectual in result, but betray little shortcoming in substance. Yet, when all is said and done, it is surely no prejudice which impels the conclusion that the

excellencies of the Koran make apparent the far more exceeding excellencies of the Book of Psalms. It may be strange and pitiable that it should be so, that after a thousand years and all that happened therein the faith of the Orient should have become dimmer instead of being bright with the brightness of perfect day ; but this is the verdict I must perforce record.

(Note added after a year.) Professor Cheyne has now (1904) put forth what he rightly calls a new book, and not a new edition of his former book, on the Psalms. In this new publication his version of the 90th Psalm begins :

> O Lord ! thou wast our stronghold,
> Our God age after age !

which is an improvement on the "asylum" of his former version ; but, on the other hand, his rigorous and

more advanced criticism has reduced the whole Psalm to a sorry show of shreds and patches set about a central, almost petulant complaint of the desertion of Israel by Jehovah. The great meditations which make the character of the Psalm as we know it are in this view subsidiary accretions of a later time. It may be that scholarship and criticism drive us to these conclusions; but the only result is that we must rejoice in the continuous inspiration through which the Psalm has been built up, and be grateful for the inheritance thus received, the greatness of which is not in any way diminished by the knowledge we may acquire of its noble growth.

Prayer and natural sequence.

THERE was a sentence in the sermon this morning which one would think must have provoked inquiry among many of the congregation; but whether they turned it over in their minds and asked themselves to what it would lead them I do not know. Neither do I know whether the preacher himself had elaborated his own thought, though I must suppose he certainly carried it somewhat further than the bare sentence he let fall. The sermon dealt with prayer, and we were almost casually told "we cannot, of course, pray for any alteration in the ordered sequence of natural phenomena." I am no stenographer and will not vouch for the exact words I have written

down, but I believe they faithfully represent what was spoken in the pulpit. The doctrine itself has long since been recognised by me as past question. To recur to an illustration I used some months since in another connection, no one would now dream of praying against an eclipse. We know why and where they must happen, and the certainty of the reappearance of an eclipse at the appointed time passes all certainties of testimony. It may indeed be suggested that an eclipse is, after all, a harmless phenomenon ; the ignorant savage is affrighted when it comes and prays to be delivered from it ; but when the dragon that would eat up the sun or the moon retires discomfited no one has suffered more than a transient alarm. The objection does not seem to me at all relevant; but what shall we say to the volcanic visitations that

have swept down the mountains of Martinique, and darkened its skies with ashes, and hurried innocent crowds of men, women, and children out of existence? No student of natural science can regard this as other than an incident coming in due course, as much ordered in its sequence and as certain in the moment of its appearance as the eclipse we can calculate. Take, again, that tidal wave which, a few years since, rose as if even out of the sea on the shore of Japan, and swept some thirty thousand human beings without warning back into death. I know not how many tens or even hundreds of thousands a similar tide rushing up the shores of Great Britain would not swallow up in its coming, yet we heard of this event in the Far East with scarce a ripple of emotion, and we acquiesced in it as an illustration of

earth movements, the law of which might not be discoverable, but was not the less absolutely continuous and unchanging. Human lives are the sport of forces which have no relation to human conduct faulty or faithful. And if we rise to the conception of the universe, if we "take wings of fancy and ascend," and see that the same laws are in action through all space and amid all worlds; that the record of nature shows no sign in any place or at any time of a breach of continuity; that a cataclysm bursting a planet into fragments, if it has happened, is no more a departure from ordered law than the fall of an avalanche in spring or the bursting of a bubble on a stream, we are irresistibly driven to the conviction that it is vain to dream of praying for a departure from the ordered sequence of natural phenomena.

We may learn more and more of the course of this unalterable sequence, we may guide our conduct by our knowledge of its continuous movement, we may by this knowledge avert from ourselves some of the consequences which would be fatal to unprepared ignorance, but there remains an unbroken chain of events in the physical world which no effort, no desire, no aspiration on our part can put aside or suspend. And what about the life—the physical, the spiritual life of man ?

Special providences.

What must be the answer to the question with which I left off last week ? Surely the wider our knowledge, the more exact and penetrating our scrutiny, the more clearly it is borne in upon us that apart from our own conduct the course, tenure, and issue of our

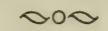
physical life are regulated by laws as unalterable as those which govern the combinations of inanimate matter. Nor does our conduct in any degree limit, much less defeat, the operation of these same unalterable laws. We may affect the forms, the channels, the manifestations of this action ; but the action is there as sure and as certain as that which keeps the planets in their orbits. By ignorance, by intemperance, by vice—through want of knowledge of law, or wilful disobedience—we may shorten and make miserable the days of our life, as by wise knowledge and wise conduct we may lengthen them through serene and happy seasons ; but every moment's physical existence is the inevitable outcome of the conditions of previous moments wherein can be found no trace of outside interference suspending or deflecting the continuity

of the whole. Changes which in our days of ignorance astonish us with their unexpectedness, are seen in the light of fuller knowledge to have been no other than what must be the outcome of the situation. If this analysis is true—and though here and there a grave and eminent physician may hesitate to approve it, it remains the basis of all medical science, the foothold of all medical art—it must follow that prayer in relation to health cannot be vitally separated from prayer in relation to storms and earthquakes. I know how unacceptable is this conclusion. To most of us it must always seem infinitely sad; and those who in the time of health may bow to its truth will break down in the passion of watching by the sick-bed of their beloved with a cry for help, for rescue, for deliverance, such as in days of old was believed to be the frequent

answer of pious entreaty. What kind of God is this that knows no pity and listens to no prayer? The question is cruel, the lesson is hard, yet there is something to which we may reach beyond. If perfect knowledge discards many forms of prayer, it may yet reveal a worship of its own. The deeper, the broader, the more searching, and the more widespread our appreciation of the reign of law, the more emphatically must we discard the suggestion that we are points in a fortuitous concourse of atoms, the more assured must be our faith in the blessing which waits upon and is a part of conformity to the Perfect Will of all things. Our knowledge of the physical universe is still slight; it is nothing; yet it is infinite compared with the attainment of the most powerful minds of the ancient world. Its transcendental superiority is shown

in nothing more clearly than in this—the impossibility we feel of using the language which contented them. It has been long since said that chance is but another word for ignorance. As ignorance is overcome the realm of chance contracts. So, it must be confessed, does the sphere of what has been called providential interference. All the illustrations which supported belief in it vanish one after another under the inexorable light of advancing science. But Order becomes more clearly enthroned in, through, and over all, as the same light grows and strengthens. There may be a gulf which cannot be bridged over between this vision of Order and the recognition of an Intention, a Will, a Soul of all things ; but if no science can take us across this gulf, neither can science exclude the hope that aspires to, or the faith that believes in what is beyond.

Spirit is here calling unto spirit, and conviction rests upon experiences which cannot be weighed or measured by any instrument, however fine, employed in the laboratories of science, and for the reality of which we cannot turn to the attesting consciousness of man.



The co-operating will.

We live in a world governed by law. Our bodies are shaped, grow, and decay according to law. But the will itself that moves our limbs and directs our actions, how far is that free? If we retire within ourselves we have to confess that no deed of ours is absolutely disconnected from our past. The circumstances that environ us, the influences under which we have grown to be what we are, our own former acts manifesting and at the same time building up our characters—all these contribute to form

a chain of antecedents to which the next act of our being is a sequence. If any one insists that this sequence is inevitable he may appeal to much to compel the conclusion. Nor is there any profit in protesting that it is dreary, that it is humiliating, that life is dishonoured and worthless, if we are mere automata. What we have to decide is whether the conclusion is true. Looking back on my own life, as every man must, I cannot accept it. If I know anything I know that time after time I have had a choice. Circumstances have been urgent and pressing, they have often conquered, but they have not always been irresistible; and sometimes the weak will has been strengthened to overcome what seemed all-devouring desire. If I have to confess the impulse of the past, I think I must also confess a sustaining spirit

assisting my own will in overcoming the stress and pressure of the impulse. Here, if anywhere, is revealed the encompassing God. And the experience is common if not universal. We are dead indeed if we do not feel a fellowship with Paul when he tells us of the strife within him. Down the long past comes the abundant testimony of multitudes, not all knowing or professing Christ, whose lives have been lives of struggle, of defeat, and of victory ; and of victory won most of all by faith in an Infinite Good, the recognition of which is at once a prayer and a help.

How much, Preventing God, to thee I owe.

We have life and we have light—light within us and light without ; and the light which is not ours leads us forward to see that the highest life is found in yielding ourselves to the perfect law. So is

prayer transformed, not abolished, born again out of death. We do not cry to interest an inattentive nor to placate an alienated God, not to avert a purpose, but to fulfil it. So does prayer find its most absolute and inclusive expression in the words of the Master, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." No syllable can be taken away from those luminous words. I almost dare to say that the abbreviated sentence so often heard, "Thy will be done," is not a Christian prayer; and if the agony in the garden be quoted against me, I would reply that I find there a confirmation of my meaning. Bowing before an Almighty One, of whose will we have no belief save that it is omnipotent, we may say with Job of old and with the Moslem of to-day, "Thy will be done." But the complete prayer is that it be

done on earth as it is in heaven; that the perfect order, to which Hooker on his deathbed felt he was summoned, should be brought to pass among us, and that we, feeble, faulty, helpless as we are, might even here be brought to fulfil the higher law and live the higher life. Much may be taken if this remain. Such an aspiration is more than an aspiration—it is a pledge of work. It lifts us up into a redeemed world, where we are found fulfilling that service which is also perfect freedom. *Orare est laborare.*

Easter sentences; the Athanasian Creed.

FEW things seem to me more idle than the attempts to explain the causes which move us towards this or that object with the force of love. We are drawn as it were irresistibly onward, but when we try to discover the secret of the attraction to which we yield we gain nothing, whilst the charm and the power overruling us are in danger of passing away. There are phrases of Scripture thus filled with an indefinable and inexhaustible fascination. Even if we could explore their innermost recesses, it would perhaps be better to leave them unexamined. The plague of analysis may be stayed on their thresholds. To-day was Easter Sunday, but I must confess the service began with

one member of the congregation comparatively inattentive. Suddenly, in place of the customary Venite, there came the special sentences of the day: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." In a moment I was seized with a sense of the indescribable beauty of the verse. I know not what it was. Perhaps the bright day of early summer, perhaps the serenity of the quiet morning. Whatever it was, the words came upon my ears with a sweetness as unexpected as it was complete. "Not with the old leaven . . . but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" went echoing and echoing through me. Through the Proper Psalms of the day and the Lessons with their strange and

wonderful narrative the impression still remained dominant — "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Ah, if indeed we could thus keep the feast! But the charm was as rudely dispelled as it had been suddenly evolved. What is this? *Quicunque vult* — Whosoever will be saved . . . I sat down in the corner of my seat as if I had been shot. I was indeed brought down from the sphere of winged contemplation into the snares of the fowler. The inexpressibly odious had taken the place of the inexpressibly divine. Some persons do, I suppose, find a comfort and an assistance in the phrases of the Athanasian Creed. For my part, I think that if I were so thoroughly orthodox as to accept every doctrine which it tries to formulate, I should still be repelled by this arid symbol. I reject it not exclusively, not principally, on account

of its damnatory clauses. Were these expunged I should still feel a profound distaste for what I am afraid I must call its pretentious pedantry, through which shines no glimpse of the grace of the Gospel. I may not accept—I do not accept —every article of the Apostles' Creed or of the Creed of Nicæa, but I am not repelled by the recital of that which I do not accept. I bow before the simplicity, the strength, and the seriousness of these formularies. Even in the latter, those who differed about an iota were passionate believers inspired with an intense sense of a living doctrine. In the Athanasian Creed I can only find the outcome of a collaboration of minds moving in barren intellectual exercises aloof from love and grace and fellowship. It is not a psalm of life. Dead in its origin, it has a savour of death. The rest of the morning service

was, so to speak, covered for me with a pall. It is long since I have communicated, but on this Easter Day, with its bright beginning, I might have remained quietly in my corner during the office; but as it was I escaped at the customary break to get out again into the clear spring sunshine.

Can it be dismissed with indifference?

Reading over the last entry there comes the ever-recurrent thought, "This is to treat the Athanasian Creed too seriously." Perhaps so. Certainly when I look about I seem to find among intelligent laymen a habit of thinking of the Creed with something like contemptuous derision. It would not be fair to quote the answer Huxley said he gave to a lady of his acquaintance, seeing he was a professed Agnostic. Yet the *mot* may be remembered, since it is recorded in his biography,

and gets bandied to and fro amongst ordinary men as a just pleasantry. The lady had told Huxley that she had sat down when the Creed was being recited, and expected his approbation and sympathy; but he replied, "My dear lady, I should as soon think of rising from your dinner-table because I did not like a particular *entrée*." Those who repeat the story with a chuckle must share at least his indifference. I recall some jesting in an old article of Froude's betraying the same mental attitude, though with a possible tendency to a repudiation short of repugnance. Another illustration which survives in my memory is a saying which passed round the lobbies of the House of Commons a good many years ago, which originated with an eminent front-bench man who would at least claim to be as orthodox as any layman of his generation. It was

à propos of Mr. Gladstone's Irish Land Bill, of which the member in question happily observed: "It is like the Athanasian Creed. None of us understand it, but we all believe in it." I am not sure one could not get a beneficed divine now and then in his humaner hours to be amused at this sally. The temptation is great to indulge in this same wide-spread temper. Why not let the Creed slide? It does not deserve indignation. Even if it was optional—in which case I am apt to think we should gradually cease to be offended by it—I should agree with this view. Unfortunately it is thrust down our throats, and with explanations which make it less rather than more tolerable. If I understood him aright a Church dignitary defended its use not long ago not for its doctrinal, but for its historical value. It was a chant of triumph surviving

from an old controversy not quite intelligible to us men of to-day, but worthy of being repeated in connection with Church history. This does not seem to me to better the matter. The Psalms may clearly be chanted without priest or people being understood to make every sentiment their own which is thus repeated; but a creed stands on a different footing. It is a profession of belief, and when a particular profession is rehearsed with added emphasis on the greatest festivals of the Church it is a bitter mockery to suggest that it may be regarded as an historical monument of archaic value.

What we think of Christ.

I HAVE for some time been drawing to a resolution to undertake a particular task. It is not an easy one, and there are many reasons besides its difficulty to explain one's desire to evade it. Yet its performance is a plain duty, and it would be mere cowardice to pass it by. I want to force my mind to answer the question, "What have I come to think of Christ?" I no sooner state the question than I seem to be recoiling from it, and indeed my purpose is to undertake some preliminary inquiries before I attempt to answer it directly. First, then, I would ask what Christ thought of himself. Next, I would try to realise what his disciples, during his lifetime,

thought of him. After this it would be fitting to give a definite shape to the belief that Paul held of Christ. After these principal inquiries are pursued it would be proper for a scholar to try to picture for himself what has been the conception of Christ entertained during the successive centuries of the existence of the Christian Church. But this stupendous labour I have neither the knowledge nor the power to discharge. I shall be content to set forth, if I can, what we may gather to have been the belief in Christ of two or three men of our own race and of recent times, whose lives are known to us in great fulness—of men who, far from abandoning the world, were in it and of it, and yet were beyond question sincere believers. When I shall have fulfilled the work thus set out, if that prove possible, I shall be

ready, if ever I can be ready, to answer the main question, "What have I come to think of Christ?"

The New Testament; the Gospels.

First, let me understand how I regard the New Testament. When was its Canon settled? I do not remember with any precision, nor indeed is the point important. The Canon was certainly established long after there could have been any personal evidence of any weight in relation to it. Pious use and traditional respect had their just influence, and I am ready to believe that as the task was approached in a sincere and serious spirit the workers were guided to a right conclusion. I know of no suggestion that anything omitted approaches in value the least valuable part included, much less surpasses it; as we may say happened in the settlement of the

Old Testament Canon, whence was excluded Scripture now and for ever sanctified by the citations of Christ himself. It is more important to consider the writings of the New Testament separately. There are the four Gospels, telling us of Christ's life, death, and teaching; the book which gives the history of the earliest propagation of Christian faith; the letters of Paul and other apostles; and the mysterious Apocalypse. It is now, I believe, admitted by scholars that the earliest of all these writings are found among the Epistles. It may be that every Epistle was written before any one of the Gospels took its present shape. Certain it is that no one of them contains any reference to any narrative of Christ's life as being in the possession or within reach of the men to whom they were written. In the preachings

of the apostles recorded in the Acts there is the same absence of any reference to any Gospel history. There are plenty of references, both in Acts and Epistles, to the Psalms and the Prophets, but none to any of the Gospels as we know them. It seems a just inference that they were not known to have been written, and most probably had not been written. It is worthy of note, by the way, to observe how brief was the body of doctrine given and received, on the foundation of which households were baptized and churches gathered together. Paul's teaching was profound and far-reaching, but it was told in few words, contrasting sadly with the overlying masses of dogma found in theological libraries. To return to the Gospels, to which we must primarily look to have what Christ thought of himself. They are

written in Greek. Now Christ did not speak in Greek; he did not teach in Greek; there is no evidence that he or any of his immediate disciples knew any Greek. It is now the received opinion that the earliest Gospels (Mark seems to have been the earliest of all) were based on still earlier narratives and memorials first written in Aramaic and subsequently collected and translated. It is frankly stated by St. Luke that his narrative was a compilation, and Matthew's and Mark's Gospels bear internal evidence sometimes of the superposition, sometimes of the juxtaposition, of different versions of the same incident. All that I have so far written is, I believe, now treated as commonplace by authoritative teachers of unimpeachable orthodoxy. The Synoptical Gospels are brought down

in date, and are confessed to have been made up from materials now lost, written in another language by unknown authors. In some at least of them, in the form now in our hands, are found portions not contained in the earliest extant manuscripts, and yet the earliest manuscript dates more than a hundred years after Christ's death. Reading the Gospels with such knowledge as this, it seems to be impossible to treat every part of every one of them as of equal authority. We cannot refuse to apply the same principles of criticism to them as we would apply to other manuscript histories of like circumstances of origin.

The miraculous birth.

What this implies may be best illustrated by reference to a subject with which the name of the Dean of Ripon has been lately associated.

The earlier chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke contain a narrative of the miraculous birth of Christ. Neither of these Gospels makes any reference to this introduction in its subsequent chapters. There are passages in both which show that this account was not within the knowledge of Christ's companions. St. Mark has no such narrative. It is wholly wanting in the Gospel of St. John. No reference to it is to be found in the preaching of the apostles or in the letters written to the churches. It seems inconceivable that Paul could have been acquainted with the story. It certainly had no organic connection with the message which he or any other of the apostles conveyed to the world. Paul preached Christ crucified and Christ risen. Whatever may be thought of the resurrection, Paul believed in it,

and his whole doctrine is founded upon it. He could not speak, could not write, without testifying to this cardinal fact of his faith. Had the miraculous birth of Christ been part of his belief he would equally have insisted upon it. We are driven to the conclusion that Paul either knew nothing of the matter or he thought it of no value, and the latter alternative is surely inadmissible. And what is said of Paul is equally true of John, of Peter, of all the early disciples and apostles of Christ. Their belief in their master, and in the revelation of God in him, required no departure from the humanity of his birth. The only explanation of the silence of all the earliest and closest preachers of Christ respecting this story—which, once started, has been woven into the faith of Christendom, so that to the vast mass it may now seem inseparably

part of it—is that the story came into existence in a post-apostolic time when the materialism of a later band of believers required an origin for Christ of which the spiritually-minded founders of the first churches never recognised the necessity. The feeling that the story of the miraculous birth must have thus arisen is confirmed, and gains the dead weight of certainty, when we reflect that it is inconsistent with the account of the descent from David which is naïvely interwoven with it — a descent which is itself inconsistent in its details with the records of the earlier Scriptures.

What Christ thought of himself.

I HAVE been reading again the Gospels in these last days, with the desire of answering the question I proposed, "What did Christ think of himself?" The task is not so easy as we once thought. It is most difficult to put aside all the tradition and the teaching received from our earliest years, and to realise what is in the Gospels themselves as independent documents apart from the superincumbent masses of comment which have been heaped upon them. Apart from later editions, we are so much accustomed to look upon the New Testament as one, that we unconsciously carry the doctrines of the Epistles into the reading of the Gospels. Even when by resolute endeavour we keep

them apart, and do our best to read the Gospels as men for the first time becoming acquainted with their contents, the difficulty of my proposed task is not overcome. A conviction of what I must call the patchwork character of those histories and a sense of the varying authority of their various parts must tend to some confusion and indistinctness of apprehension. The fourth Gospel has always been recognised as different in character from the other three; but within the limits of the three the unity of light is here and there broken into divers colours. I would speak anything but dogmatically of what I find, but as I grope my way along, this much seems to become more and more clear, that, in the Synoptical Gospels at least, Christ at no time spoke of himself or thought of himself as God. This may seem strange, but if any man will take

the trouble to think for himself what he would expect would be manifested in a being having the self-consciousness of God, he must, I think, confess that that is not found in the person of Christ as revealed in the first three Gospels. I do not know whether in saying this I am or am not unorthodox. We do not think out these questions, but I believe the popular conception is, that Christ had within himself the infinite knowledge and the infinite power of Godhead, and that he knew this. This I take to be the popular conception, but it may be unorthodox. The orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation, wherever it is to be found, may so dwell on the perfect manhood of Christ as to exclude the self-consciousness of God incarnate in man. All I have to say is, that no trace of this self-consciousness is found in the Gospels when we read them with

the simplicity of perfect detachment from added doctrine. Christ never claimed for himself a position which he did not claim as within the aspiration of all men. He was Son of God, but there were other sons of God. He was the Son at one with the Father, but he taught that this was a communion in which the Father would have all men live. He repudiated any confusion on this point, for when his disciples called him good, he blamed them, saying, there was none good but One. What we do find shining more and more clearly is the abiding doctrine of Christ, that God was about him and with him and in him, upholding, sustaining, guiding, and safeguarding him. But what he believed thus of himself he believed of all men, if they would, without let or hindrance, accept the Light of the world. He taught men not to be

anxious, for God cared for them always; nay, he cared for the sparrows, that they should not perish; for the flowers, that they should be glorious in beauty; and men were greater than flowers or birds. Christ in the presentment of himself to himself, as revealed to his disciples, was Man, the Son of man; the realisation — to our modern language — of what man might be and should be. He taught with authority, because he taught with the inspiration of God. But if the eyes of others were single they would see with the same clearness the innermost truth of things. He worked wonders, but it was through faith, and if others had faith they could do the like; nay, the narrative tells us that to the extent of their faith the like was done. Christ was God-possessed. He was from God. He walked with God. He does not claim to be God or to

have equality with the Father, though at one with Him. This uplifting of spirit seems to me the explanation of many mysteries. Perfect assurance in the Life Everlasting finds its expression looking backwards as well as forwards. That which came into existence may pass out of existence. That which cannot perish is in its nature eternal. "Before Abraham was, I am." Our own poet was touched with the same thought :

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar.

I repeat that all this does not appear to me to be necessarily unorthodox. I do not know. The orthodox theologians of to-day may hold that the Divinity in Christ is shown in the union of the perfection of character with the perfect unconsciousness of power. However

this may be, what I have to say is, that this unconsciousness of Christ touching his Godhead is the revelation of the Synoptical Gospels.

The exaltation of an ever-living communion with God seems to me to explain, what must appear strange to many readers at first hand, the intensity of condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and doctors, of Christ's generation. These men were formalists such as have gone before and have come after them; in no wise differing, in living and believing by rote, from the greater part of those we know, and only open to passionate condemnation under the dominance of transcendental possession. Approaching the Gospels with the teaching of childhood, we wonder that men could have been so blind or so wicked. Reading them as men with all prepossession laid aside, we sadly feel that there was

no exceptional wickedness found in them — at least, no wickedness that cannot be paralleled in other generations. So, too, the denunciations of Capernaum and Bethsaida as places outdoing in wickedness the cities of the plain are prerogative examples of that awful sense of the sinfulness of ordinary life that moves souls illuminated with the direct revelation of God. The judgment is passed as the judgment of God, but there is no claim on the part of the speaker to be other than the instrument of God.

It may be asked whether the predictions of the Resurrection and of the Second Coming do not show Christ's thoughts about himself to have gone far beyond what I have suggested. As to these I would say, in the first place, that the prophecies of the Resurrection seem to me to come very strangely into

the Gospel narratives. It is admitted that they were not at all understood by those to whom they were addressed, and they have a look of being woven in after the first narrative had been completed. With respect to the prophecies of the Second Coming I recall the admission of one Oxford preacher, that every candid reader must confess that they were spoken and heard as referring to something that would happen in the lifetime of the passing generation, which did not come to pass. But I am not concerned to produce a complete answer to those difficulties. Difficulties there are and must be in the reading of the Gospels in whatever light we interpret them. I am only trying to express how the thoughts of Christ concerning himself gained shape in my mind as I struggled to apprehend the vision which, out of varying and sometimes inconsistent

materials, affords the most living presentment of truth.

What the disciples thought.

If I turn to the second part of the inquiry I have put before myself, and ask what the disciples of Christ who accompanied him through his earthly mission thought of him up to the time of his death, I suppose it will be admitted that no one of them looked upon him as other than a man greatly favoured by God, and indeed so favoured as to be hailed as the Son of God and the Christ, but in no sense and under no interpretation to be regarded as God. He was their companion, their associate, their friend, their master also, but a master of their own kind and of their own order. Was he not the son of the carpenter—nay, himself a carpenter, or of some other craft such as Galilean peasants use? Had he not brethren

like other men, not separated or removed from him by any recognised uniqueness on his part? He spoke with authority indeed, and not as the scribes; but so also had John. He did many wonders, but in their conception of the order of the world this compelled no conviction of God dwelling among them. Many men were in various degrees credited with wonderful acts; it was even given to themselves to exercise some reflected power beyond the ordinary course of life. The meaning of his greatest sayings was hidden from them. They understood not his prophecies, they misunderstood his mission. They looked for a redemption of Israel, but it was from an alien rule, a restoration of the ancient glories of independence, something, it might be, in the nature of a fulfilment of an imperial destiny. Some of their own prophets

of old time had risen above the limits of national regard, but the companions of Christ were Jewish among the Jews, and the foremost among them shrank from that all-embracing freedom of communion with the Gentiles with which Paul carried the Gospel to the acceptance of the world. I do not think there is any trace to be found in the records of the intercourse between Christ and his immediate disciples, or any recognition on their part, of his authority as God Incarnate, which became the foundation of the creed of Christendom.

The Fourth Gospel.

READING over the last pages of my diary, I ask myself whether I am quite justified in treating the fourth Gospel as standing so completely apart as to have little or no bearing upon the questions I have been considering. I think I may claim that I am warranted in the view I have taken. Yet a word or two of explanation may be added to what has been already given. I have been noting what Christ thought of himself, and what his disciples, who were his living companions and followers, thought of him whilst he was with them. Whatever may be our final opinion as to the authority of the fourth Gospel, it will be always confessed that it was written many

years after the Passion of Christ. It is put forward as the testimony of one who had survived many years, and about whom it seems to have come to be said that he would remain alive until the Second Coming. The interval had been a time of many thoughts, of much brooding over the past, of the bringing to remembrance things that had been forgotten, and of understanding things that had been misunderstood. It is not too much to say that the evangelist throws more light upon what he and others had come to think about Christ than upon what they had thought about him when they were his daily associates ; and so also the great discourses which are the glory of St. John's Gospel are proclamations of the mission and authority of Christ, which were not understood when spoken. The development may be simple, natural,

and just. The recollections may be pure recollections of sayings that are only dark through excess of light; but such development and such recollections may be properly put aside when we are asking what the disciples of Christ thought of him when living; and must be ranked as an after-vision as compared with more immediate records touching the question what Christ thought of himself. I am under the impression that every student will confess that the opening sentences of St. John's Gospel express a theology that was never within the conception of the peasants of Galilee, and yet those sentences may be said to strike the dominating note of the fourth Gospel. The Gospel abounds with confessions of the failures of Christ's disciples to understand what was said and done before them; and from this point of view the Johannine Gospel might

be cited as substantiating what I have been trying to express instead of invalidating it. The Gospel contains, side by side with its own special illumination, the most simple and direct confession of the blindness of the immediate disciples of Christ.

The obligations of the clergy.

JOTTINGS in a diary do not necessarily pursue an intended course. One plans beforehand the discussion of a particular subject in a formal fashion, but something occurs to interrupt the chain of thought, and the scheme is laid aside, at least for the moment. In another week I hope and purpose to resume the work I had sketched out, but to-day I was led to turn aside to consider another matter which is never far distant from one's thought. I want the question answered, "What are the allowable limits of opinion among clergymen of the English Church?" A layman may believe or disbelieve pretty much at his pleasure. To his own conscience he must answer,

and practically to no other earthly authority. Some social inconvenience might here and there follow the notorious holding of extreme negative views; but even this inconvenience tends to become less and less among all classes. I doubt whether a suitor of serious life and otherwise acceptable would be denied by ordinary parents the privilege of wooing a daughter on account of any excess of unorthodox opinions. Perhaps there is more danger that the maiden might refuse to be approached than that father or mother should interfere with an imperative negative. Apart from a lack of social amenities, the layman, or at least the unaggressive layman, need have no fear. No civil disability attaches to him for defect of creed. A scrupulous priest may be found at long intervals hesitating to administer the sacrament to some one he deems unor-

thodox, but the privilege of marriage and the rite of burial seem never to be questioned.

A clergyman does not and cannot enjoy the freedom of a layman, at least as long as he officiates in any way. I believe some clergymen claim that they are of right entitled to be treated in the same fashion as laymen. They say that all, lay and cleric, are alike members of the Church, and must be tried by the same standard. But this rather points to an abridgment of the layman's freedom than to the extension of the freedom of the clergy. When we attempt to realise what are apparently the legal obligations of a clergyman they seem to be overwhelming. He is committed to his ordination vows, to an assent to the Thirty-nine Articles, and to all that is involved in the habitual use of all the services of the Prayer-book. Comparing the immaturity

of knowledge and of thought of a young man of three or four and twenty with the plenitude of the propositions embodied in the Articles and in the Prayer-book, we feel there is something at once pitiful and ludicrous in the contrast; we wonder what will happen if the young man continues to grow; we are almost consoled by the thought that the crushing weight of the burdens he has accepted will prevent the danger of expansion. In truth, however, the legal obligation is not so extensive as I have suggested. After all, the great question to be asked when we inquire whether the law prohibits anything, is, What is the penalty which is the sanction of the nominal prohibition? The clergyman is theoretically tied and hedged about by a vast concourse of propositions. How and when will he be punished if he strays outside them? The answer to this

depends upon the interpretation which may be put from time to time on the terms of obligation of the clergyman by a select number of elderly gentlemen acting on a Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. These men, although they may not always be ready to confess it, are, like the rest of us, children of their own generation, and the limits of freedom they allow are at least co-extensive with the limits of freedom their contemporaries have come to recognise as tolerable. They will not willingly fall below the measure of tolerance current about them. The elasticity of interpretation is easy. In different generations in past ages men have gone to and fro feeling out the bounds of thought and expressing a great diversity of opinion.

Any instance that can be cited in the past of a man who was not disturbed though holding some

belief not entertained by all his contemporaries furnishes an argument for similar toleration to-day. Two more considerations may be adduced which must have weight with any Court of Appeal. The formularies which we have inherited were originally framed so as to embrace divergencies of opinion held in different schools of thought. A certain latitudinarianism was the special distinction of the Tudor settlement. Next, as there has been practically no subsequent revision, and the possibility of revision to-day is confessedly regarded as hopeless, the limits of opinion have been necessarily expanded by the mere force of a growth which time compels and laws cannot fetter. The men of the seventeenth century did not think as those of the sixteenth; the note of belief in the nineteenth century was in startling contrast to that of the eighteenth; and who

shall say what the twentieth century may produce in the development of opinion? Middle-aged men are aware that views which were held shocking in their youth are now accepted as commonplaces. There has no doubt always been an esoteric and an exoteric doctrine. A select few in every generation have drawn conclusions which escape condemnation because the select few keep them to themselves. Colenso's discoveries annoyed men of this class by their publication. Nowadays they startle nobody. The speculations of *Essays and Reviews* are so far accepted that the possibility of any successful impeachment of them has become almost incomprehensible. We learn without surprise the opinion of a Westminster canon that the plenary inspiration of the Bible and the consequential equality of authority of every part of it—accepted with-

out hesitation by the Reformers, and but yesterday the common basis of judgment of the mass of Churchmen — now only linger in the Ordination Service of the English Church. He would be a bold man who would venture to define what may or may not be thought to-day by an English clergyman ; and his audacity would be irrational who would prescribe the limits of orthodoxy fifty or even twenty years hence.

Is the moral freedom of speech and thought of the English clergyman co-extensive with his legal immunity ? There is much to be said for an affirmative answer to this question. Legal immunity comes through the exercise of freedom, and if men had not allowed their thoughts to range forwards the landmarks of the law would have remained unchanged. We are really under a great obligation

to those who have gone before us, who have thus led us, however little, further upward towards the attainment of truth. Yet I am conscious of two qualifications not to be overlooked. I doubt whether any man can ever justify to himself the holding of opinions which he cannot dare to avow. No man can indeed be arraigned for an opinion which he keeps a dead secret. The law could in no case touch him. But there are cases where men permit themselves to divulge to a chosen few speculations, outside ordinary acceptance, which they do not communicate, and would refuse to communicate *ad populum*. If this is ever justifiable it can only be during some brief period of inchoation of belief, and I think this kind of gestation should be narrowly watched. I am indeed uneasy about admitting such a partial and passing secrecy. The

second qualification I had in my mind may appear Puritanic, but indeed it is often forced upon me. It has more than once been involved in what I have written in former pages. I cannot bring myself to tolerate the continued performance of the central acts of worship by a clergyman who has lost his belief in their reality and truth. I find no difficulty in the reading of the Bible by those who utterly reject the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of its books, if in the ordinary course of preaching they make their true judgment of what they read plain to the people. The recital of the Psalms in the course of the Church services presents some more difficulty ; but here also the minister may justify himself by a plain expression of his thought. The repetition of prayers in which we do not believe, and the open proclamation of creeds when we silently

repudiate article after article, are acts which cannot but produce the most deadly injury to the priests, if there be such who submit to them, which no contemporaneous confession of disbelief can really avoid. When worship becomes an acted falsehood it must at all costs cease. Is this judgment harsh? Would it have excluded that searching after and apprehension of higher truths in the past for which we are now glad and grateful? Is it permissible to the layman who frequents the services of the Church without visible protest to question the privilege of the priest to use a freedom like his own? I hesitate over these questions, yet I find myself abiding by the conclusions they would seek to put away. There is a long line of gradations along which, under the stress of qualifying doubts, belief lapses into unbelief; and sincerity of avowal in

the face of a congregation will cover much progress over this road. But the fatal step seems to me to be past when worship becomes a lie, and the priest is an actor disbelieving in the substance of his highest acts of service.

Paul's thought of Christ.

In pursuit of that course I sketched some weeks since, I come to the inquiry, "What did St. Paul think of Christ?" Face to face with this question I am abashed at the audacity required to sustain it. What St. Paul thought of Christ has been the subject of endless exposition by innumerable inquirers. It may without exaggeration be said to be the foundation on which the great mass of Christian belief has been built. If I purpose to look into it for myself, I know how much justifiable scorn may be poured upon my attempt. Nevertheless, I hold it to be true that each man for himself must frame some answer to this inquiry, and there ought to be no ground of offence if our

answer sincerely thought out is simply put forth. We must look to the Epistles and to the narrative of Paul's life and work in the Acts as the materials to be searched. The Acts of the Apostles, when steadily looked at, is seen to be a composite work like the early Gospels, containing parts of different origin put together at some period removed from the time of the transactions reported. But whilst I have had to admit great uncertainty and confusion in the discovery of the substantial facts of the Gospels, I confess that out of the Acts and the Epistles the personality of St. Paul shines clearly defined as of one whose portrait is recognised strong, vital, and impressive, in the apparently few master-strokes of a great painter. We can accompany him in his journeys, we can be with him whilst he writes his letters, always in the companionship of a true man

before whose nobility of character we bow, but who is yet one with ourselves. I do not say St. Paul is always consistent in the sayings we are still bound to accept as his. In his struggles to comprehend and express to his hearers and correspondents all the mysteries of life, death, and immortality, he could not be always coherent. But his incoherency, if the word may be used, is an illustration of the thoroughness and unity of his life rather than a defect. What was the thought of this great, brave, pious, exalted soul about Christ? There is no suggestion that he had ever been brought into contact with him whilst alive. He had not the advantage of reading any of those narratives of Christ's life which we have inherited. He did indeed again and again live and converse with those who had been Christ's companions. These times of inter-

course were confessedly broken and separated ; still we read of intervals passed with James and Peter and with other disciples. There were conferences and even contentions. But there must surely have been also simple memories conveyed to him by these friends of what they had seen and heard whilst living with Christ. It seems strange, therefore, how little St. Paul tells us of the personal history of the Master. Neither the sayings nor the doings are reported by him in the manner we should have expected, especially when addressing hearers wholly uninformed. Once, and I think only once, does he recall a saying of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But if special texts are not quoted by one who knew well how to quote the Psalms and the Prophets, St. Paul believed himself to be entirely possessed of the mind

of Christ, and this he never ceased to exhibit to his hearers and friends. As to history, whilst the deeds done in Galilee and in Jerusalem fell into the background, Christ crucified and Christ raised from the dead were never out of St. Paul's vision. However marvellous the intensity of this conviction, it is beyond dispute. If Christ was not raised all was vain. In some way which I do not now stop to inquire into, Jesus was revealed to St. Paul as the Christ, the one long foretold and chosen from of old to fulfil the purpose of God, whose coming had been mistakenly anticipated as giving to the Jewish nation a new birth of freedom and power, but who had been perfected in suffering to redeem Jew and Gentile. Thus Jesus was the very Christ, the reconciler, the uniter, the At-oner, in whose obedience and wisdom and righteousness we are admitted

to righteousness and redemption, and even sanctification. Of all this revelation the resurrection was the seal and the proof. Yet withal it must be noted that St. Paul does not speak as men have since spoken, and still speak, of Christ as God; although the ascription of power and of glory might easily pass into this language. He is the Son of God, the everlasting Son of God, the Revelation of God, but yet apparently constantly separated in the mind of St. Paul from the Father. I know how difficult it is to detach from our reading of St. Paul's own words the observations and beliefs that nigh two thousand years have encrusted upon them; but this subordination of Jesus seems to be a true statement of St. Paul's thought, however real was that exaltation which St. Paul was never weary in confessing. One other thing must be stated if we

are in any way to put ourselves in St. Paul's point of thought. Christ had not only been chosen for what had happened; he was chosen also to be the Judge of mankind in what St. Paul looked to as an immediate future. "The day" was named. St. Paul, and indeed all men and all nature, waited for it. It was at hand. The night was far spent. The ends of the world had come. The then living generation would not pass away before the day came and the judgment was fulfilled. Not all men would die, though all would be changed. At any hour the trumpet might sound, and the dead be raised, and the living caught up, and the old fashion of the world pass away. This vision of a near immediate end of all things was as clear to St. Paul as any other part of his belief. His certainty is indisputable, and it seems to me as indisputable that his

anticipation was not realised. His language has been tortured and history has been twisted at times to get rid of his prophecy, and at times to show that it has been accomplished; but I find it difficult, and indeed impossible, to understand how any one who reads St. Paul's language fails to realise his intensity of feeling that in the lifetime of those he addressed Christ would reappear to abolish the old order of change and death, to relieve a groaning and a travailing nature from its pains and sufferings, and to open that new dispensation when corruption should put on incorruption, and mortality immortality.

A Jew and a visionary.

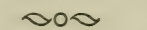
In St. Paul's message the history of Christ's life and preaching fell into the background and became as it were forgotten, whilst his death, his resurrection, and the im-

pending judgment and re-creation of man and nature were the prominent and constant subjects of exhortation. I ask myself how this came about, and whether there was anything in St. Paul's education and character to account for it. We know that he was a most devout Jew, thoroughly instructed in the sacred books of his nation, one whose thoughts dwelt with the prophets and singers of earlier days. He was learned not only in the Scriptures, but in the traditions, the comments, the glosses which had been woven about them, and he accepted without suspicion of misgiving all the historical details of Jewish history. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and it needs must be that his mind had been occupied with musings on the great works of the Christ that was to be. We may conclude, as I have already said, that he never saw Jesus

in the flesh, and we cannot well guess what kind of report reached him of his life and character. We know that he was very much set against those who believed in Christ, and that he consented to the stoning of Stephen ; at which time, if not before, he may be presumed to have heard of the resurrection. Yet he must have refused to accept the report, for he went forth to persecute any in Damascus who trusted in Jesus, and it was on his way there that he was arrested by the vision and the voice that changed his whole life. When he himself is reported as speaking of this great event, he tells us he alone heard the voice ; but it is elsewhere said that those who were with him heard the voice, though they saw no man. Paul himself was a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. Again and again he is visited in the night and receives invitations and admoni-

tions from spiritual messengers. Praying in the Temple long after his great conversion, he saw another vision, and we may conclude that it was yet another time when, whether being in the body or out of the body he could not tell, he was raised in an ecstasy to the third heaven and saw and heard things incommunicable. These visions and dreams are illustrations of one and the same character. They are the manifestations of one and the same life. The vision on the way to Damascus brought the persecutor to his knees; it changed the enemy into an apostle, and more than an apostle. Yet he does not seem to have ceased to be a Jew. The belief that Jesus was the Christ, that his suffering was a fulfilment of the true meaning of the Messiah's mission, was an expansion, not a destruction, of the Jewish Church. St. Paul frequented synagogues to

bring into them this new faith, but not to overset the reading of the Law and the Prophets. When he went to Jerusalem he worshipped in the Temple, being in no wise hindered by the ceremonial sacrifices about him. He refused to lay any of the obligations of Jewish ritual upon Gentile converts, but it does not seem that he himself relaxed in his observance of the law, or encouraged relaxation in other Jews, and it was only as time passed by that the fulness of the emancipation in Christ came upon him. Jewish notions clung about him, as to some of which indeed, notably as to the position of woman, he spoke with hesitancy, as of one not fully assured of the validity of his doctrine.



The risen Christ.

On one side of his great message St. Paul's preaching was assuredly

vain and his faith vain. He looked for a speedy return of Christ as the Judge. In the lifetime of some of those he addressed, before all had tasted death, the Messiah would reappear in glory; the living would be caught up, the dead would be raised, and all would be changed. I think that if we would complete the circle of St. Paul's belief we must add that until this second advent he thought upon the dead as sleeping, and that in no metaphorical or symbolical sense, but as actually lying unconsciously awaiting the awakening that was to be. The Great Day has not come. Had it been hinted to St. Paul that fifty years might go by without its realisation, he would have met the suggestion with his impenetrable belief in the certainty of its quick appearance. Could it have been forced into his conviction that a thousand years would pass, and yet

another thousand years be nearly completed—that not one generation only, but that threescore would flit across the face of the earth, and yet the dead would be still sleeping, and no living caught up around the Judge in glory,—I know not how his faith in other truths would have survived the shock. "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ risen." Are we entirely removed from the force of facts which gainsay a prime article of St. Paul's creed, though we may choose to represent it as one peculiar to himself? Nigh two thousand years have been spent since the death of Christ. Has the great miracle of an abiding and life-sustaining belief in his resurrection through all that time added force to its credibility, or has this been weakened through a keener appreciation of the testimony on which it is based and a growing sense of the absolute uniqueness of

the recorded fact? It stands alone. We need not mention Enoch, and I suppose no theologian of authority now regards the rapture of Elijah into heaven as a fact of history. It is a manifestation, rare but not unexampled, of the highest exaltation of the faith of man. In his passionate love of those who have led him and lifted him up to a higher level of being, he will not consent to admit of the possibility of their death. They may be withdrawn for a time from converse and presence with him, but they remain alive, to reappear under still higher conditions. If we turn to the mere history of Christ's resurrection, numerous and specific as are the recorded incidents of his appearances, we might be constrained to confess that here also we are confronted with too fond asseverations. The records are numerous, but they are not coherent. They differ

among themselves, and cannot without strain be made consistent with one another. In the narrative of St. Matthew the angel tells the women who go to the sepulchre that Jesus is risen and goeth before his disciples into Galilee, where they shall see him. And the disciples did go into Galilee, and saw him and worshipped him, though some doubted. But the narrative, without any apparent feeling of strangeness, interposes the statement that the women, returning from the sepulchre, met Christ and held him by the feet and worshipped him. Apart from this revelation to the women, there is no consciousness on the part of the evangelist of any appearance of Christ in or about Jerusalem. St. Mark has the same narrative of the angel telling the women who came to the sepulchre that Christ was going before his disciples into Gali-

lee, where he should be seen ; but he adds nothing whatever of any subsequent appearance in Galilee. He fastens instead on what in another history we should call the later accounts of appearances to Mary, to Magdalene, to the two disciples walking and going into the country, and to the Eleven, to whom apparently in Jerusalem he delivers his valedictory exhortations before his ascension. In St. John's Gospel we find yet other variations. Peter and the beloved disciple are brought into the narrative of the discovery of the empty sepulchre. Two angels are seen by Mary, but are silent, whilst Christ himself calls her to a recognition of him, and yet with a *Noli me tangere* prohibits that embracing of the feet which Matthew commemorates. As the angels are silent there is no forewarning of meetings in Galilee, though one entirely distinct in

character is recorded, with the miraculous draught on the Sea of Tiberias. St. Luke's narrative, as becomes the faithful and loving compiler he assuredly was, is in its details more minute than the other evangelists, and yet is distinctly separated from them. There is no exhortation by the angels to go into Galilee, and indeed when Christ does appear he commands his disciples to remain in Jerusalem, where they do remain until he is taken from them in neighbouring Bethany and ascends into heaven. There is no appearance to Magdalene or the other women. The first vision of Christ is given to the disciples journeying to Emmaus, and the same afternoon, though the particulars are not recorded, to Peter, whilst the same evening he appears to the Eleven.

"If the dead rise not"?

I do not wish to dwell upon the inconsistencies of these narratives so innocently, and one may even say so unconsciously, gathered together in the writing of the Gospels. It has been the painful effort of many generations of more critical gifts to harmonise difficulties which need not trouble us any more than they troubled the original evangelists. A harsh judgment would say they destroy the historical character of records in which a sympathetic reader finds the power of fond beliefs begotten of great love. How often has it been heard in the history of the world that a hero, a saint, a leader, an inspirer of men will not be willingly let die by those to whom he gave new purposes, new powers, a new life! Such men may cease to be seen, they may be removed, but they are not dead, they will return. There are abundant records of these pro-

found convictions in the past, and even in our more prosaic days emotional and imaginative races are found cherishing the beliefs that their lost leaders are still moving about the world, and at intervals vouchsafing glimpses of their existence. Why talk of races and of nations? The dullest of us who has lived sufficient years of life has known what it is to see the apparition of the lost. The door opens and we seem to see, nay, we see, the bantering air, the gracious mien, we hear the rallying voice that would call us away from the stupidities of books. After a time the vision becomes rarer and rarer, and it is only in dreams that we hold converse with the dead. The vision fades as the passion of companionship recedes. This brings me to what may yet be recognised as the vital question touching the resurrection of Christ. It is not

whether the history of a physical phenomenon is true, which, when it first gained belief, was accepted without difficulty as the first act of a great transformation that would come to pass for all men before a generation had passed away, but which has remained absolutely unexampled in the subsequent life of the world, and cannot in the form in which it was first accepted be reconciled with the possibility of a like transformation for all the generations of mankind that have come and gone—it is not, I say, whether this reported physical phenomenon was a real event, but whether the spirit of Christ is yet alive, dwelling amongst us, abiding with us, comforting us, sustaining us, inspiring us, whenever we open our hearts unto him. It was in this sense of the question, "Is Christ living?" that Clough wrote his noble poem and Jean Paul Richter con-

ceived his great dream. It is an answer to this question I am trying to reach, and towards it I approach in narrowing circles.

An ideal edition of the Bible.

I WISH I could hope to see published a book I have long desired. This is an edition of the Bible after my own mind. Numberless have been the editions put forth even in our own language, but I know none which is not defective in form, or overloaded or repulsive in its comments and glosses. My ideal edition must not be broken up into verses, but should be printed continuously with such divisions into paragraphs as the substance requires, and the poetical books and fragments must appear in lines corresponding to their versification. This condition is, I know, satisfied in more than one issue of the Bible procurable in the markets. I would add also that the several

books, though capable of being bound together, should be printed separately. They would, of course, usually be collected into a volume or volumes, but these latter could be composed according to the owner's taste, and some books might well be recognised as always fit to stand alone. If I may mention a pair, I think the Book of Job and the Song of Songs must be admitted to be distinct in character and separable, each within a cover of its own — so dissimilar are they from one another and from the other books of the Bible. I desire, however, that the principle of separability should be allowed even where books may be connected in spirit and in authorship. I remember when I was a boy I had given me two or three of St. Paul's Epistles, simple texts, printed in very small compass, I suppose 16mo, which gave me even in

those early years a feeling of the independent life of each letter, which was of some educational value. I have never seen anything like those little books since. It may be that they are produced, though I think if this were the case I should at some time or other have come across them. But I think it rather strange that they are not common. So much as to form, but far more difficult of realisation are my desires as to the introductions, notes, and illustrations which should make up my edition. It is imperative that these aids to the reader should be kept within narrow limits. They should be such as are compatible with every-day use by busy men who want to be taught how to look at things, but who do not want to be instructed word by word as to what they should see. Some introduction must state briefly the history

of the Canons of the Old and New Testaments, and each book must have a yet briefer introduction giving the best views as to its origin and history. Brevity and again brevity is the prime necessity, and to realise this we must be told with authority the results of the latest judgments rather than be conducted through long chains of investigation and argument leading up to these conclusions. As to notes and illustrations, everything that could be drawn from other histories, from the monuments of the past and from the ever enduring characteristics of Eastern life, would be apposite and useful if chosen for the purpose of making the narratives live again before us, and of setting forth the chanted Psalms, the brooding prophecies, and the letters of counsel and of edification, as real voices speaking and echoing through the ages. As

to comments and glosses upon doctrine, I desire so little of them that I may almost say I want none. This is perhaps going too far, and yet I know not. There are books so involved and obscure, such as I may have to speak of presently, that without some help it often seems impossible to comprehend their meaning. But even here the help that is wanted is not the construction of doctrine so much as simple assistance in determining the sense words and phrases had when first spoken and first heard. One other characteristic must be mentioned of the edition of the Bible I desiderate. It must be conceived in a spirit of piety and of freedom. Reverence for all that these Scriptures have been through past generations and still are to myriads of men and women must never be wanting; yet coupled with it must be the reverence

which is for ever due to the mind and conscience of man. Long remembrances of gratitude and of piety we owe to the Great Dead, yet we should be untrue to ourselves if the enfranchised spirit does not rise with unclouded eyes and with no fluttering wing to contemplate what we have received from them.

Reading the Prophets.

I have been led to put into words an old dream by the fact that to-day began Advent-tide, and readings from Isaiah. Again and again throughout the year are chapters from the Prophets read in our hearing on Sundays and great festivals, but there seems a special fitness in the selection of them for autumnal days. This feeling may come from association. With the fall come the last Sundays after Trinity, and the Advent season, and Lessons from the Greater

Prophets, culminating in Isaiah. The summer light is over. The days of relaxation are past. More strenuous weeks have come. A sombre air fills our churches; artificial light may be necessary at the reading-desk or lectern. With such circumstances of time and season the warnings and denunciations of the Prophets come home to us. Thus do these large figures appear through the gloom, and their dark sayings have a fit accompaniment in the waning light and dying year. What is the meaning of these strange, remote, awful voices? Speaking for myself, I would say that in no books of the Bible do I feel a greater need of the editor I desire. The noble imagery, the glowing and vivid words, the tempestuous energy of the writers excite the strongest feelings of admiration and reverence, yet I am continually baffled

by the rapid transitions of passionate emotion, and now and then, at rare intervals, there seems to intrude something one is tempted to regard as passing political declamation. The books are a mystery, and the writers are at least as mysterious as their books. That such men could be found to succeed one another through several generations ; that, despite the reception which they, like all prophets, had to undergo, their words should have been treasured, and scraps of scrolls on which some of them were written should be collected together ; that out of such origins such a literature should at last take definite shape, and become the subject of the deepest study of the best minds of a nation in the centuries before the birth of Christ,—all these things make up a phenomenon of revelation unparalleled in the education of man.

Our ignorance of them.

When I look back upon the last page I feel that instead of being a plain confession of ignorance, it seems to suggest a larger knowledge of the Prophets than I possess. After all, how little do I know of them! I may not be worse off than the great majority of my fellow-men who are reputed to be fairly well educated, but if we examine ourselves we shall probably all agree in admitting our lack of knowledge. I take stock of myself. I think I could make up the list of the Prophets, though certainly not in the order in which they are found in the Old Testament; but if I proceed from a mere recital of names to an attempt to appreciate the individual characters of this great roll, I should probably find myself unable to frame separate pictures of half of them. It is a good many years since I learnt from Francis Newman

to understand the great cry of Joel, and Joel has ever since been a person by himself. Amos shines before me in a herdsman's dress, with a wallet on his hip, and the voice of this puritan shepherd is distinguishable from that of all his fellows. Isaiah, by title and by tradition the greatest of all, has been of late years resolved into two Isaiahs, but though the result is that we have a clear conception of each of the pair instead of the confusion of speech which characterised the one of earlier teaching, this gain is accompanied with a great upsetting of the authority of the traditional editions of the Prophets. Isaiah is not merely cut into two, but the separate parts are rearranged in new orders, and some fragments hang loose as of doubtful claim to be inserted in either part. When we consider under what conditions the writings

of the Prophets were produced, with what difficulty the scattered fragments were preserved, and how speculative the subsequent task of bringing them together, we cannot wonder when we are told of two or three of them that their books are like patched quilts, most arbitrarily put together, and inviting great doubt as to the real authorship of many portions. Such a view does not diminish the difficulty of getting a coherent sense of the chapters as they stand, and does not help us to figure forth the Prophet who is made sponsor for the medley. I will not, therefore, go much further with my confessions. I will, indeed, only name Ezekiel as standing out among the foremost of the seers of Israel with a personality of extraordinary vividness and power. If I went further, I should find myself presently stumbling among

names of no real significance to myself, or, as I think, to most Englishmen. Who of us knows anything of Habakkuk save what Voltaire said of him—Voltaire, who, we may be pretty well assured, knew nothing himself of the man upon whom he fastened his enduring jest.

The way of interpretation.

I want an editor, intelligent, courageous, and pious, who shall do what is possible to make the books of the Prophets understanded of the people. What will he have to say to us of that foretelling of the future to spell out which was the first object of editors of former generations? I believe very little. If we read these books with unsealed eyes, we find they are all, or nearly all, present-day utterances, primarily if not exclusively occupied with the times in which the speakers lived, and calling up

the future only in a passion of faith that in it the present would be found purged and redeemed. An exception may perhaps be made of the Book of Daniel. In its original form this was confessedly such a piece of patchwork that great fragments had to be torn out and put in the Apocrypha. But that which remains still betrays some influence of oriental fantasy, and the "horns" may be taken, by those who care for them, as attempts at foretelling. Quite otherwise is the accustomed march of the goodly fellowship. The Prophets are oppressed with the shortcomings of their neighbours about them. They denounce the apostasy from Jehovah. They recall their countrymen to the true worship of the Eternal — nay, it is given to them to reveal a higher worship than had been known by the best of the generations before them.

They proclaim the woe that waits for the unrepentant, and then, with a sudden recurrence of ecstatic faith, announce the final joy and peace of righteousness. I am told that some of the latest students surmise that these assurances of ultimate triumph were added by later men who sought to smooth the asperities of the original Prophet; but this is surely an illustration of pedestrian, not to say creeping, criticism. Those Prophets who are most deeply moved by the sinfulness of their own time were most profoundly assured of the final righteousness of the kingdom of God. It is in this sense that we recognise them as forerunners of the Gospel, yet not as having attained to that perfect light. They foretold the Messiah, but the Messiah was in truth a Mahdi who should purge the worship of the Temple and re-establish the

dominion of Israel over the Gentiles. So were they interpretated by successive generations ; so were they read week after week in the synagogues ; and when the Master came, and, reading from Isaiah, said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," the people so little understood him that they presently thrust him forth with wrath from among them. We have had a different intelligence of the Prophets, but can we boast that we have reached the innermost truth of their teaching, that to us has been revealed the fulness of knowledge to which they reached forwards ? I fear a perfect setting forth of their great sayings is yet a long way off.

As I have already said, I have thought one might be helped to answer the question, "What do I think of Christ?" by trying to realise what others think or have thought of him. For this purpose I have it in mind to deal with two or three men, not of our own generation, but still so near to us, and so well known in character and life, that there is little risk of misunderstanding or misrepresenting their thoughts. The first of these men is Dr. Johnson. He seems as good an example as possible of the best men of the eighteenth century, who lived in the world and with the world, and yet kept a true standard of religious life always before them. Not a recluse

The beliefs of Dr. Johnson,

like Cowper, not a missionary like Wesley, he had a basis of piety as true as theirs, though differently held. We all remember his praise of one Campbell as a good man, nay, a pious man, for though he had never been inside a church since he was married, he never passed one without taking off his hat. Johnson was a pious, even a superstitious man in this sense, but he was much more, for he had always an inward conviction of a higher life, towards which he always aspired, with terrible fallings away. He groaned over his sloth, his greed, his uncleanly humours of mind and body. In his *Prayers and Meditations* these lamentations are habitual, yet they never cease to be genuine. But if we go no farther than this, may it not be said that the heathen do the same? The recognition of a higher life, the struggle to attain to it, the

courageous confession of failure, and the renewal of resolute vows—are not these things to be found among the philosophers of Greece and of Rome? And it must be confessed that Johnson had much that was akin to this old type. It was not an accident that made his strongest and his best work his *Imitations of Juvenal*. He was like his original in his scorn and hatred of degraded public and depraved private life; like him too in the savagery with which he dragged forth to light the foulnesses of humanity—savagery which in both was redeemed from cynicism by strange and unexpected glimpses of tenderness. Johnson and Juvenal had much in common; but what had Christ given to Johnson beyond this? We must turn to the *Prayers and Meditations* for the answer. I trust that in this there is no unseemly prying into another man's

soul. In Johnson's *Prayers* there is an awful sense of an Unseen and Infinite Power overruling the lives of men, but Johnson prostrates himself before an assisting God who wills the good of men, to whom men may cry for help with a perfect assurance that the appeal will be received with ever ready grace. This is Johnson's great faith. He believes in an Infinite Power at once helpful and loving; and amid the terrible repetition of broken, scarce-remembered vows, there comes year after year the cry of the struggler, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." But the vision of Christ scarce appears in the *Prayers*. They end with a tag, an incantation — "through Jesus Christ our Lord," "for the sake of Jesus Christ," and so forth; and now and then a phrase referring to the merits and intercession of the Redeemer may occur in an earlier

part, and this is all. Johnson meditates on the death of Christ; there is no trace of meditation on his life. This may partly be explained by the fact that these prayers are largely connected with an Easter Communion, but is more to be accounted for in a recognition of the scheme of Johnson's theology. A devout communicant of to-day finds in the Eucharist something more of communion with the life of Christ than the memory of a propitiation. Dr. Johnson reverenced the Passion as of infinite moment, and yet regarded it almost as a mechanical sealing of a covenant of release. One way or another the life of Christ fades into the background. There is no realisation of it. There is no rapture of contemplation. Its distinctive teachings are not quoted, scarcely regarded. An outpouring of passionate devotion to the personality

of Christ would savour of an alien mysticism. Johnson would perhaps have repudiated as an unbecoming exaltation the suggestion that we should aspire to be assimilated to the character of Christ; and indeed the man who went through Scotland with that aloofness which he betrayed to every form of Presbyterian communion could scarcely at any time have been deeply moved with the record of Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria. In a word, Johnson must always be recognised as a profoundly religious man, but if we go through his life, or track out his thoughts to discover in them distinct evidence of apprehending the character of Christ or following after his peculiar teaching, we may well be dismayed at the uncertain and confused results of our search.

of Sir W Scott,

The second man I want to bring into the witness-box is so far away from Johnson in mould and training that it may seem strange to put them together. I purpose to call Sir Walter Scott. In character equally heroic, with sympathies equally strong and far more wide-reaching, the soul of honour, courageous, sincere, dutiful, Scott was wholly removed from Johnson on the religious side of his life. He was no more free than the other from some tincture of superstition. He had in him something of the same tendency to credulity against his better judgment. But he had none of those dark recurring confessions of unfulfilled resolves, no groaning repentance over the past, no fervent aspiration after a better life in the future, such as marked year after year Johnson's pilgrimage. Sir Walter found so rich, so full, so honourable a life in

the affections of this world that the other world troubled him little. A pious son, an affectionate guardian husband, a fond father, and a friend whose friendship flowed forth to whatever was good, noble, true, and friendly in all conditions of humanity, Scott bore himself bravely and joyously through good fortune and ill fortune ; though not without memories of his past deep in his heart, ever responsive to the touch of feeling. Yet it cannot be said that the colour of his life was Christian. His standard was of another type. He ingenuously confessed that he found himself more at home in reading the Old than in reading the New Testament, and the man who would not forgive a dead brother for a fault which he afterwards found reason to believe had never been committed, was of the Jewish type rather than of the New Revelation.

But we have a confession of his faith under his own hand which bears the ineffaceable stamp of sincerity. I know few books more pathetic than Scott's *Journal*, which was given to us in its entirety some dozen years ago. Lockhart had indeed printed the choicest parts in his *Life of Scott*, but the *Journal* published by itself somehow impresses one more with the picture of a man struggling on under an adverse fate, maintaining through growing loneliness, and in spite of failing powers, a fight with fortune, till at last the dying body could no longer carry onward the unconquered mind. In this Journal of piteous endeavour we see him sitting down one evening in drear December to fathom the mysteries of life and of death. God—a future life—judgment to come—these three things he knows; that God must be just he believes;

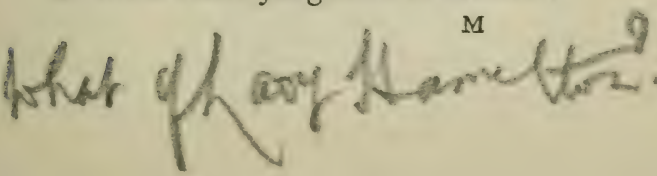
that the future life must be worthy of beings God created cannot be doubted; and with this Scott's speculation and faith stopped. In this simple Deism what I am tempted to call the fripperies of creeds disappear. Nay, so bare is the confession that the essentials of the Christian faith vanish also. The vision of Christ's life sheds no light upon it. The doctrine of St. Paul is as if it had never been. Scottish life, steeped through and through with the colour of religious opinion, had surrounded Scott from his childhood. He himself was a faithful follower of the Episcopalian Church, and would honestly have given an unhesitating assent to all its Articles. Yet with a feeling that the end was coming near, that the time was at hand when his journey over the bridge of Mirza would cease, he asks himself what he knows and what

he anticipates, and his answer is that there is a God, there must be a future life, and with that life there must be judgment.

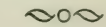
It is some weeks since I wrote of Nelson the last entry, and in the interval we have been parted, my little book and I, and for a time it seemed possible that I had lost it. The loss would in every sense have been beyond recovery, and that would be grievous enough, and yet what perhaps pressed me more was the feeling how extremely incomplete this fragment must appear to any stranger into whose hands it might drift. Now that I have got the book back I must at least try to complete the expression of my thoughts on the special subject I have been dwelling upon. I pick up the thread dropped with Sir Walter Scott. There is a reminis-

cence of Nelson most provocative of speculation. In the morning of Trafalgar, after he had summoned his captains to council and explained his plans and dismissed them, when the ships were just about to engage, a youngster went to the Admiral's cabin with a message, and without being seen himself, surprised him on his knees. The youngster withdrew; but we, once admitted to the scene, cannot withdraw. What was Nelson's thought? What was his prayer? He knew the tremendous issue of the fight just about to begin. He knew the risk to himself, though he could not know it would be his death-day. Something he may have been asking for himself, but we may be sure more for his country. Yet, whether for himself or his country, what could have been his belief as to the effect of his entreaty, however strenuous? There was no

pretence about him. He had no idea of using formulas because they were traditional and decent. I have no doubt that he was as sincere and as energetic on his knees as in council. On that great morning he realised all that he had ever felt about life. But what were the limits of this feeling? I am like Hamlet irresolutely speculating over the body of his uncle, but I feel bound to confess that our great national hero seems to me in this sphere of thought never to have passed beyond boyhood. In the divinity of Christ his humanity was lost. A man could scarcely without profanation dream of making him an ensample of conduct for himself. But the merits of the Son enabled the Father to be merciful, and a hearty supplication, especially if couched in the English language, had a promise of success. Is this a harsh judgment of Nelson?



Does it make him appear too much like Louis XI. ? My intellect and my affection are at strife, and I must repudiate the comparison as odious, yet what I have written I have written. His piety was the piety of his time, and in converting the God of the universe into a National God, can we dare to say that he differs much from the masses of men of our own generation, whatever may be the country that calls them citizens ?



of Bismarck.

I pass to another personage, whom no one would accuse of retaining any boyishness of mind or of character. Prince Bismarck was in all respects a fully-developed man. His intelligence, his mastery and grasp of things are abundantly demonstrated in his life and work, and the completeness of his success has made him understood of the

most vulgar as well as envied and emulated. I would not even say of him that his moral growth had been arrested, as has been said of another man, for on this side also his character was symmetric and complete. What was his ultimate conception of the criteria of morality might not perhaps be easy of determination, and need not be determined. It is sufficient that he recognised it not only as the gainful thing to do, but as the right and proper thing to do, to make Prussia and the Prussian King the head of the United German Empire; reclaiming the Duchies on one side, driving out Austria on the other, coercing and deposing irreconcilable kinglets and princes, and finally beguiling France into a war so as to exact the cession of Alsace and Lorraine as the penalty of a conflict he had himself provoked. It was in his view the fulfilment of the

highest morality that Germany should dominate Central Europe, and in the accomplishment of this end the details of diplomacy, the forging of false telegrams, and the slaughter of tens of thousands of men were casual incidents. It would, indeed, also seem that in his view success was necessary for the sanctification of his work. I recall the afternoon of Sadowa. The hours had gone by of that sultry summer day, and still there was no sign of Austrian defeat. The apple orchards of the Bistritz showed singular fruit lying beneath the trees. Around the shoulder knoll of Chlum charges and counter-charges had served only to cumber the ground with the white- and blue-coated dead of many nationalities. Bismarck sat hour after hour on horseback near his King, watchful, waiting, hungry, and with a ready pistol in his holster wherewith to

shoot himself should the Crown Prince not arrive in time and the battle be lost. Would suicide have been a confession that defeat at Sadowa demonstrated the immorality of the struggle? Was the unification of Germany to the exclusion of Austria right because Sadowa was won? Would it have been unright had Sadowa been lost? The suicidal intention, about which I have no doubt, suggests this dilemma, but perhaps should be regarded only as an illustration of a colossal egotism identifying the man and the cause, so that if the latter failed the former must perish. Is it permissible to suggest a doubt whether, for the history of mankind, it would not have been better had Sadowa been lost and Bismarck died? The unity of Germany would have been delayed, but would not have been finally defeated, and it might have been established on

a more assured basis of national freedom and of international peace. Such speculation must, however, lead me astray from my special object, which may already have been obscured. I am thinking of Bismarck, as of those others I have named, as a man of life, a man of action, a man of principle, and a man of repute, and am asking how did Christ appear within the sphere of his thought? The morality I have recognised in him was assuredly far removed from the morality of Christ, and the personality of the Master must seem an entirely foreign and alien element in the life of Bismarck. Some perfunctory repetition of a traditional creed may have been possible, but Christianity is only tolerated on the understanding that it is a notional congeries removed from reality. Yet it must be remembered that in the French campaign, if not also

in the Austrian—as to which I have no distinct recollection—he carried with him as a daily companion a Moravian *Gebetbuch*. This does not differ materially from our own Prayer-book, though so far as there is a variation it is in the direction of more personal devotion, while the *Gesangbuch*, which commonly accompanies the *Gebetbuch*, contains hymns not infrequently akin to some of the best hymns of Wesley. I admit that to me Bismarck with Moravian books of devotion excites much the same feeling of difficulty and wonder as I have in thinking of Nelson on the morning of Trafalgar. The human mind is extraordinarily supple, and the education of life accommodates it to all conditions, and puzzled as one may be at the apparent contradictions of humanity, one may still perhaps be glad to think that some flavour of the other

life survives through the lives of all men

A Church dignitary.

I have been moving about in the outer courts, among men who have lived in the world and loved it, yet not without high and serious thoughts influencing their courses; but if I can without sacrilege, I would fain step into a narrower enclosure and try to realise something of the inner belief of the sworn servitor—not indeed of any one of the mass. There are thousands upon thousands of excellent men ministering daily in the churches, who, in the earliest years of their manhood, have taken upon themselves the sacred offices, and have given up the rest of their lives to the simple, uninquiring discharge of accepted duty. I do not deal with such men. I want a representative of a much smaller yet definite class, and I would if I could

muse over some definite example, a personality as distinct and individual as Johnson or Scott. A reminiscence of a former train of thought will perhaps serve. Not very long ago I was talking with a friend about a high dignitary who had passed from us. I had known the man, had indeed met him not infrequently, and on occasions that might have led to intimacy. But intimacy never came. There was ordinary social intercourse, little more. But it still served to throw some private light upon a character otherwise made manifest in many ways to many men. My friend had known the dead man better, and though naturally more critical than exuberant, was moved almost to enthusiasm in speaking of the rare qualities and fine humanity of him he had known. I listened mostly silent, not questioning the truth of the

picture which inspired so much admiration and love, yet having on my lips a question which I did not dare to put lest the necessity of meeting it would have been painful. The amenities of life would indeed have been shocked had my inquiry been uttered, for the words on my lips were, "And what do you think was the nature of his sympathy with the character of Christ?" I did not ask the question, and I do not know how my friend would have answered it. Did the high dignitary ever put it to himself, and if so how would he have answered it? I doubt whether he ever did, and no answer was therefore provoked; but is my imagination impious and diabolical if, diving deep in the most secret recesses of thought, it frames what would have been the opinion of the natural man disrobed of all his ecclesiastical vestments? I think then he would

have regarded Christ as a rather rough-tongued, quite illiterate peasant, not indeed without a singular gift of insight, such as is not uncommonly found in persons of uninstructed genius; but without culture, without learning, without any appreciation of the diverse courses of civilised life among many races and in many lands; ignorant of history outside his own tribe, and not specially instructed in reference to that; and painfully wanting in the respect and esteem which, with his own lack of education, he ought to have felt towards men more learned and more devoted to the sanctuary than himself. I will not say that instead of sympathy there would have been antipathy, but I cannot figure to myself anything of the constraint of love.

Am I quite wrong in all this? Before the question is answered, let me at least restate what I have

been trying to do. There never was a more devout and sincere Christian than Dr. Johnson; yet, poring over the most sacred revelations of his character and belief, I am drawn to the conclusion that the Christ of his creed, the Christ which fitted into his system of religion, was an imagination out of which the real person of Christ had departed. Scott, again, was a man of pious fidelity to the principles and duties of life, and he sincerely professed the fullest belief in the Christian faith, yet in his case too the personality of Christ is spectral, if it has not vanished. In a like rigorous pursuit of inquiry I seem to see that a man can be a zealous son of the Anglican Church, sacrificing himself in its service, eager for extending its influence, and for permeating the whole social fabric with its power, and yet the very centre and kernel of its life may be

such a transformed conception that the substitution for it of the original personality would produce a shock of surprise if not of distaste. Is it not a test of our appreciation of the character of Christ how we should behave ourselves if there could come upon us a new revelation of him? If I appear to have been applying this test uncharitably in the case of others, let me plead that I have done so only that I might more thoroughly apply it to myself.

The Ninetieth Psalm. Death and Life Eternal.

THE 18th morning brought around to-day the Ninetieth Psalm, and thoughts of it occupied my mind during the rest of the service, displacing all that came afterwards. The pitifulness of man! The vanishing point of his life in the movement of the world! Nay, the evanescence of the world itself in the presence of the Eternal, which existed before the "mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made"! How often have we heard this Psalm, and under what different circumstances! As we grow older and friends drop about us, the verses are repeated more frequently in our ears, inducing perhaps more submission, with a growing sense of

coming home. In country churchyard, in city minster, in the midst of the trackless sea, in the chill chapel of a crowded cemetery, whilst paying a ceremonious adieu to a merely official friend, and when sorrowing darkly over the death of the dearest, come the old familiar words tinkling as it were their refrain, "Man passes, the world changes and shall be changed, One abideth."[1] Man passes indeed—the Psalmist knew no more. In his words there is no forecast, unless we put it there, of a life to come for us. Submit, submit is his admonition. Have we any sure ground to go further? Listen! They are reciting the Articles of the Creed, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." What does this mean? In what sense can we

[1] I have elsewhere noted Prof. Cheyne's analytical reduction of this Psalm, published since the above was written, but it does not affect my sense of the weight and power of the Psalm as we have received it.

repeat these words? The men of former generations were content to accept a simple faith in the revivification of the dead corpse, and if the thought of bringing back the body perplexed some by the associations of disease and death which memory recalled, they found an escape in a vision of the body celestial which St. Paul enforced with the great analogy of the buried seed. That glorious metaphor fails to put us to silence to-day. We know that the atoms composing our poor bodies are separated and again combined, and again separated and once more united, and serve as shells for many spirits. And the germination of the seed drawing into its growth and expansion and reproduction of itself the atoms of surrounding matter lends us no assistance in conceiving of what must be a new creation of a physical body, if a physical body is necessary

for the fulfilment of the future life. There is surely a singular materialism in the assumption of this necessity, and it involves difficulties so obvious that it is a standing puzzle by what force of common consent men have refused to entertain them. The difficulties, moreover, increase with the growing ages. St. Paul, as I wrote some weeks ago, looked for the end of the world as near at hand. The generation he addressed would not wholly pass away before the great change would be consummated, the dead would be raised, and the living caught up. No inquiry disturbed him save such as may be said to arise from the thought of the physical unloveliness of death. To us who look back upon generation after generation that have passed away since his time, and who have learned to know how many generations before his time were laid at

rest in the earth, there come the added difficulties of the prolonged period of waiting for the resurrection of all men, and of the multiplied reproduction of physical forms involved in what was a common, nay, the universal, belief of the Church. Yet more questions thrust themselves before us for solution. We think of the dead mostly as stationary at the time of life in which they left us—the child the child still, although he would be an elderly man now had he survived with us. Those who have passed away in old age or after wasting sickness we may put back in our fancy to the better days we re-remember. And in this also our memory retains what it saw. How shall we interpret that resurrection of the body affirmed in the Creed so as to adjust it to these confused fancies? How can human relationships survive the great change, and

if they do not survive, where is the consolation afforded us in the promise? "In heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage." So said the Master to the questioning Sadducees of his time. But if the declaration removes one set of difficulties, it seems to do so at the cost of leaving us groping in darkness for help and support.

Material spiritualism.

I wrote just now of the strange materialism which required a new body as the endowment of a new life. This is most strange, and to me most sad, when I muse over the actions and apparent beliefs of those of our time who are especially called spiritualists. I am not thinking of those wretched impostors who with cozen and deceit practise upon the simplicity of others. I have in mind only those sincere and anxious friends who, having a great faith in

the life of the spirit, long, and feel so often that they long in vain, for communion with the dead. If we are indeed but temporary dwellers in these tabernacles of flesh, if the spirit that sits behind our avenues of sense is, and must be, independent of them, ought we not to think that a disembodied spirit, communing with our own, should enter into union with it directly, and altogether apart from the poor vehicles from which it has itself become free? The telepathy that depends upon the knocks of a table or upon the scrawling of an unseen hand upon a scrap of paper is a telepathy that binds us to earth and to matter. In the true intercourse of spirit with spirit the hulls of flesh pass away, and if we cannot have a conviction of this communion we can have no certain assurance of the life of the soul.

"What security can we have," it may be asked, "that intercourse such as you speak of is anything more than a delirious dream?" No answer can be given that will put this question for ever to silence. But the true answer seems to me to be this, that proof of the verity of the intercourse between spirit and spirit must be found in the worth of the result acquired and communicated. The message of a great prophet does in this way prove itself. It was so with the prophets of Israel. It was so with Christ. It was so with St. Paul. Each spoke of what he had received, and to those who had ears to hear the words came. So must it be, as I deem, with intercourse between our spirits and the spirits of the departed. I do not say it exists. Poor Margaret in her affliction may have been right in denying it. And if we add to the "love and

The communion of souls.

longing" of the survivor the thought of the "love and longing" that must exist in the spirit that has passed, we may well feel despair before the impassable gulf which brings to nothing such passionate desire on each side of it. To the one certain point I return and rest. The message from the dead cannot be a puerility. It must lift us up, and must prove itself by the force and the peace of uplifting that it must bring with it.

Unfulfilled faculties.

Of arguments touching personal immortality I am afraid I am a little weary. Mr. Pitt is reported to have said that Butler's great work suggested more doubts than it allayed, and though Mr. Gladstone vehemently contested this position, and could not easily believe that it was ever spoken by Mr. Pitt, the report seems to me

altogether probable. A parade of the difficulties of unbelief goes very little way towards laying the foundations of belief; and it may be that a true reading of Butler's character would represent him as a profoundly pious sceptic, who sought in acts of devotion to escape the incessant questions of a too inquiring intellect. Apart from argument, two thoughts, which at bottom perhaps are one, appeal to me for acceptance. The first is that of the mockery of man's life if the be-all and the end-all of it are here. This flitting across the scene may well be judged a bitter irony if it is a mere flash which dies out for ever. Yet when we consider the enormous record of acted time, and the apparently necessary experiences of the systems of inexhaustible space obeying the same laws and composed of the same materials as our

own, we may well ask whether man is not taking too much upon himself in claiming that his brief span here can only be justified as part of a larger existence which shall compensate for its defects. The littleness of man's place in the universe is at odds with the greatness of his pretensions. But we refuse to be put to silence by the comparison. The second thought, which is akin to the first, does not dwell on the apparent injustice of our being played with, but suggests that our faculties and aspirations necessarily point to a larger life hereafter, in which alone can be found the fulfilment of the purpose of their being. This thought is common to all who have brooded over the subject, but I know no one who has expressed it more forcibly than Lord Herbert of Cherbury, in a passage in his autobiography to which I was directed long years since :—

And certainly, since in my mother's womb this plastica or foundation, which formed my eyes, ears, and other senses, did not intend them for that dark and noisome place, but, as being conscious of a better life, made them as fitting organs to apprehend and perceive those things which should occur in this world: so I believe, since my coming into this world, my soul hath formed or produced certain faculties which are almost as useless for this life as the above-named senses were for the mother's womb; and these faculties are hope, faith, love, and joy, since they never rest or fix upon any transitory or perishing object in this world, as extending themselves to something further than can be here given, and indeed acquiesce only in the perfect, eternal, and infinite. . . . The proper object of these faculties, therefore, . . . is God only, upon whom faith, hope, and love were never placed in vain or remain long unrequited.

The analogy is most quaint and forcible, but the question at once arises whether it does not go too far. If our unsatisfied longings demand a satisfaction hereafter, what are we to say to the claims to a further life of those speechless

companions of ours who give us their sympathy, their love, and their loyalty as surely as our fellow-men, and in whom the reaching forward towards the development of present incompleteness seems even more evidently manifested. The reasoning which claims immortality for ourselves cannot easily stop with us; and indeed the poor Indian of Pope has found his counterpart in many a simple Christian. Yet the perplexities of speculation are sensibly increased by this suggestion, and two solutions have been advanced as a relief from them. The first is the recurring thought of many ages and of widely divergent creeds that the living spirit migrates from body to body, and even from species to species, ascending or descending in the scale of life as the curve inclines in successive phases. The second contemplates the absorption

of the passing spirit in the One which is always abiding. In this second hypothesis personality disappears. Nor can it be said to have more than an obscure and doubtful existence when no conscious memory survives from one incarnation to another. I cannot reckon the impressions which visit us in our earlier years of having once before played exactly the same part in the scene we are passing through as more than dim, almost obliterated memories of acts of our present life. We find ourselves struggling with difficulties, yet we cannot be easily persuaded to acquiesce in an answer which puts an end to all our hopes. Mrs. Carlyle's little dog Nero sleeps in her back garden at Chelsea. She lies within the roofless nave of the Lamp of the Lothians. Her husband is at rest at Ecclefechan. Day after day the earth heaves around and their

graves confront the steadfast sun. As years pass the atoms which composed the bodies of dog, mistress, and master are dispersed and again composed in ever varying combinations. But what of the spirits which manifested themselves in the dumb affection of the dog, the restless, eager craving for rest of the woman, and the swift, penetrating insight of the man? Must we dream of them as dwelling apart in expectancy, or as flitting from being to being, or as united with the One Will that upholds all things? The answer from which we recoil is the answer which tells of this absolute extinction. We turn from it. We look . . .

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"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

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"In him we live and move and have our being."

"... the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

Christ not master of science, nor of history,

I MUST seriously begin to-day the answer to the oft-delayed question, "What do I think of Christ?" Such preliminary examinations as promised to be useful I have made. I must not again put off the burden of the more intimate and direct inquiry. I hope I undertake it with reverence. My very hesitation suggests pain. First, then, what is my view of the range of the knowledge of Christ? It is more than thirty years since I asked an old friend, a beneficed clergyman, between whom and myself there remained the intimacy of college days, whether in his view, which I assumed was the orthodox view, Christ was acquainted with the Newtonian

theory of the movements of the solar system. He answered frankly that he had never thought on the subject, but he supposed Christ must have this knowledge. Then I reminded him of the record that the child Jesus increased in wisdom and stature. But he had not meditated upon the implications of this statement. Thirty years have made a great change in the ordinary clerical outlook, and I do not know what would be the reply of the average clergyman of to-day to my question. I suppose a much larger number, though still perhaps a minority, would unhesitatingly admit that in respect of science Christ had no more than the knowledge of his time. The perfection of his character does not require an acquaintance with all the discoveries revealed to subsequent investigators. Then another question arises. Shall we think the same of Christ's know-

ledge of history as we may have come to think of Christ's knowledge of science? Here again there would be little difficulty if we confined our attention to what is called profane history; but if we think of the history of the Jews—of the sanctions of the Canon of the Old Testament, of the authenticity of its books, of the accuracy of the narratives contained in them, and of the comparative criticism that may be applied to them—we shall probably stumble over clerical hesitation such as my friend showed a generation ago respecting scientific knowledge. Yet I have heard more than one dignitary of the Church—I think I can vouch a bishop—affirm that it would be a mistake to suppose that in respect of such matters Christ was possessed of more than the best learning of his age. I do not doubt that this will soon be, if it is not now, the

view of such a large minority of the clergy that it would be impossible to condemn it as unorthodox. It involves an admission that, with all his wondrous depth of insight, and with all the piercing power of his interpretation, Christ was historically an uncritical reader of the Scriptures. I advance to another field of knowledge. As we pass from science to history, so may we pass from history to a study of the structure of human society, the economic organisation, the laws and governments of nations, and we may ask ourselves how far Christ had mastered the social mechanism of the world. In his teaching there is, I think, no trace of speculation on these subjects. The civil and political institutions of the time were accepted as external facts much as the physical configuration of the world or the courses of the seasons ; and his disciples were

bidden to regulate their conduct as if they were members of a society secluded and withdrawn from the common life of other men, and yet resting in some way upon the continued existence of an outer mass of humanity. The reply made to those who inquired touching the payment of tribute-money seems to indicate an indifference to political relations equivalent to a renunciation of them. The reply may indeed be interpreted as nothing more than a putting away of impertinent, and even mischievous, questioners. If treated as a serious solution of a real problem, we should have to say that it showed no appreciation of what is involved in the transfer of money, and that the passive resisters of our time manifest a more strenuous conception of political duty. We must not make too much of a single episode; but the whole scope of

Christ's teaching appears to relate to a society within the world, and as that world was so soon to pass away, the perplexing question whether the society could become coextensive with it did not come up for consideration. It is necessary, however, for us to consider this possibility if we would indeed realise to ourselves our own conceptions of the character of Christ. I take two leading principles, and first that of non-resistance. The gross world finds this an impossible doctrine; and the Christian Churches, with the exception of one or two small societies, accept, justify, and sanctify the conduct of wars, at least of wars of self-defence; and self-defence is often secured by striking the first blow. I must confess, though this may appear a wild dream, that I do not find sheer impossibity in the vision of a non-resisting society growing into

a nation and being left unmolested in its peaceful integrity by the other nations of the world. The Quaker settlers in Pennsylvania were unarmed and defenceless, but were respected in peace by the Indians around them, whilst neighbouring settlements were raided and attacked. I do not reject the maintenance and extension of such a society as an absolute impossibility. But Christ's teaching went further, for it disowned the enforcement of obligations against evil-doers within a society, and left such institutions as those of law and police to the unbelievers. I know the Christian Churches have corrected all this; but if we are frank with ourselves, must we not confess that the Christian religion has become an accommodation of the religion of Christ to the world? The Christian Churches have squared and pared and smoothed the doctrines

of their Founder so as to adjust them to the conditions of unregenerated life. The doctrines themselves have been practically treated as those of an Idealist whose vision of the world was insufficient for daily use. This is perhaps more plainly seen in connection with the second leading principle to which I have referred. This is the condemnation of forethought, and the substitution for it of entire dependence upon the providence of God. Is this too absolute a statement of the outcome of the Sermon on the Mount? It may be objected that it is inconsistent with the lesson implied in the parable of the Foolish and the Wise Virgins. I admit this inconsistency, and if we start from the premise that there can be no inconsistency between the recorded sayings of the Gospel, we must force some non-natural meaning into the precepts of the

Sermon so as to get rid of it. The response made by Christ to the adjuration of the High Priest was a reply made on oath, and we are forced again to give a twist to the plain meaning of the precepts of the Sermon to get rid of this inconsistency. It is, however, unnecessary to insist on the simplest and most direct interpretation of the exhortations of the Sermon on the Mount. After every explanation they still tell us that as the ravens are fed and the lilies of the field are clothed, so may we rely upon having our wants supplied without taking forethought about them. I do not know what Bishop said society could not hold together if the Sermon on the Mount were literally followed ; and indeed the report of such an utterance may not be true ; but I confess that the leading principle involved in the appeal to the ravens and the lilies

is in my judgment quite at variance with that necessity of forecasting the future and of working for it which a clearer knowledge of the operation of natural laws forces upon us. Confidence in the continuity of these laws, which is the first requisite of real prudence, cannot be identified with confidence that our wants will always be satisfied though we take no fore-thought and make no provision for their satisfaction. This fatalistic security is, in fact, conceived in a spirit of neglect and disregard of the rigorous and unalterable operation of natural laws. What I have to say on this is summed up in the confession, that as Christ cannot be credited with the possession of the scientific knowledge of to-day, nor with the fulness of historical knowledge which has been opened up around us, neither can he be credited with having searched out the econ-

omic organisation of mankind, and mastered the secret of the co-operation of material and social forces under which we live.

nor of social organisation;

But, after all, what does it matter though we must confess that Christ was neither man of science, nor historian, nor economist? Have these admissions any true relation with his moral and spiritual teaching? I would not lay stress upon ignorance of physical science or of history, but a moral teacher who is also a social reformer apparently ought to be master of the organisation of society. If his teaching is to be permanently accepted as of supreme authority, he should even be master of the fullest development of which that organisation is capable. Indeed, we ought to find in his teaching the secret of perfecting this organisation. Whatever may

be the ultimate form of society, there must somehow or other be preserved that manipulation of the forces of nature which has enabled increasing millions of human beings within limited areas to receive day by day the means of maintaining a continued existence. Here I halt. I have admitted the possibility of a cessation of wars, which to the mass of men must seem an idle dream ; and yet if we confess, as we must, that five hundred years make but a small part in the history of man, who will deny that within such a period, nay, well within such a period, quarrels between civilised nations at least might easily come to be settled by some international authority, just as quarrels between private citizens are settled by civil courts? The doctrine of Christ is a prevision of such a progress which I cannot dismiss as impracticable teaching. I cannot, however, whilst

brooding over the most rapt forecast of the social future, find any like promise of securing its perfection through the simple teaching of Christ. The amplest development of the spirit of self-sacrifice is not enough to solve the problem. It is easy to conceive of a small society the members of which work only for a common stock, and receive in return the means of satisfying their wants from the common property of the community. Something like this was found in the first Christian Church. Something like it has since been attempted, and indeed accomplished, in innumerable societies. All such communities have, however, depended upon the world from which they were separated. They have received from without, sometimes by way of gift, often by way of exchange for their own surplus productions, supplementary commodities without

which they could not have continued in existence. A society which depends upon a world outside it cannot be accepted as the true solution of a problem of transformation which must comprehend the whole world. As we strain our minds onward we seem to see that the fullest realisation of a regenerated world requires the installation of some supreme directorate, endowed with the wisdom even more wonderful to imagine than the authority it would wield ; which should determine the extent, range, and character of work to be performed by every man, every class, every country, every continent, varying and diversifying this distribution of function as the continually changing conditions of efficient production may require. A new social order is wanted, something which one may venture to say never entered within the range of

Christ's contemplation, before such a future can be achieved, nay, before it can be sensibly approached. I sometimes ask myself whether a communistic society originally of small dimensions, and gradually extending the area and the sphere of its operations, might not by some unknown process discover in the development of its growth the secret of the repartition of work, and of the interchange of the results of work ; but I always come around to the conclusion that there is a great gulf to be overpast which can be bridged only by forces of independent origin. The beautiful and stable curves of planetary motion emerge from the action of centripetal and centrifugal powers ; and the highest development of industrial society of which I can dream requires the co-operation of the two principles of self-sacrifice and of unsparing justice. We may

dream of a society in which, without the consciousness of law, giving and receiving shall be the daily practice, but somehow or other they must coexist. Separation and association, egoism and altruism do in our imperfect society work together to produce something which is tolerable. We may look in a large future for a transformed society that shall more nearly satisfy our aspirations, but the scheme of such a realised ideal requires something the teaching of Christ does not seem to supply. Have I in some former entry in this diary used the word "insufficiency" in this connection? If I have I must be excused a repetition, for the thought it suggests is fundamental. No religion can be accepted as final and perfect which is not coextensive with life. It must have its laughter and its tears. Renunciation and abjuration are forms of defeat.

They are confessions of insufficiency to meet the whole needs of man.

but morally perfect?

Yet one line of thought remains to be pursued. Christ was not all-knowing either in science or in history; he was not all-wise in his understanding of the organisation of industrial society; but he was surely all-good. No flaw can be detected in the completeness of the goodness of his character; no shortcoming in the pure perfection of his teaching. The conscience of Christendom is an abiding witness of the divine fulness of his personality. I have already confessed to hesitations. Here they are redoubled. It is reported that Fra Angelico did his great work of painting in the cells at Florence kneeling on his knees. In the same spirit, if not in the same attitude, I would fain write what I have to say. May

I venture to point out that our belief in Christ the Perfect One has quite unconsciously dominated, even from the initial days of the Christian Church, our judgment of his acts and words. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews borrowed from the Book of Wisdom the phrases, "the brightness of his Father's glory" and "the express image of his person," and boldly applied them as verified to the full in the illumination of Christ's life. From this standpoint the record of the life is judged, and that same record establishes the standpoint. We are manifestly in danger of losing the power of true simplicity in the reading of the Gospels. The conclusions at which we might otherwise arrive are closed before us in advance. The pious reader is indeed rarely conscious of difficulty, so complete is the presupposed authority under the power

of which he reads. If questionings become irrepressible, some new rendering of the primary meaning of the narrative is apt to be discovered as a solution of them. As a last resort, the accuracy of the record itself comes to be doubtful, the jarring episode being deemed an interpolation, or at least a perversion, defacing the narrative. We all remember the animated controversy between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Huxley over the fate of the Gadarene swine. I do not wish to renew it, but I feel how great the relief would be to many if this scrap of history could be blotted out for ever. As this is impossible, the disturbed mind puts its thoughts to silence with the unspoken suggestion that the whole history is probably one of those wonder-tales picked up with too little discrimination by an uncritical collector. I turn to another episode which is to

me painfully illustrative of the received method of reading the Gospels. It is the story of the barren fig-tree. Christ seeing a fig-tree with leaves, sought fruit thereon and found none—and indeed it was not the season for fruit. Thereupon he pronounced sentence of barrenness upon it, and presently it withered. If we read this history in a Life of Mahomet, as told by a follower of the Prophet, how ready would be our moralising over the narrative. The cursing of a tree because fruit was not on it when fruit was not yet in season would require no explanation. It would be a too pregnant illustration of the temper of Mahomet. Even if we rejected the story as absolutely unhistoric, we should see in it a revelation of what an immediate follower of Mahomet thought consistent with his character and his will. Petulance is about the mildest word

we should use in connection with the supposed miracle. The orthodox reader may treat the Christian miracle in a score of different ways in as many centuries, but throughout all changes in his comment he premises the assumption that the miracle was somehow or other a manifestation of Supreme Goodness in union with Supreme Power. He twists the sentences of the narrative in and out; he is learned in his explanations of the varieties of fig-trees that are or may have been found in Judæa; but he will not be drawn into the conclusion that the narrative must be discarded as unworthy of the character of Christ, or if accepted must be admitted to throw a strange light upon his humanity. The latest canons of criticism of liberal divines would seem to lead to rejection, since the alternative involves a confession of some slightest shade of imperfection

—a shade so slight that no one would dwell on it as of any importance were it not that we were dealing with a belief to which the most microscopical defect is necessarily fatal. I might go on to suggest minute criticisms of other incidents of the Gospel history, but I will submit two only as illustrative of the way in which we do violence to our own judgments in our reading. Which of us has not been conscious of something like a gulp in accepting the parable of the Unjust Steward. If the fraud of the steward is not approved, it is certainly not reprobated. We are left with an uneasy consciousness that we are invited to admire the clever trick of escaping suffering through the success of a dishonest manœuvre. In the parable of the Householder and his Servants we are not exposed to so severe a strain, but we are still uncomfortable at

the apparent inequity of the remuneration of the labourers. We do not allow, in judging the conduct of our fellows to-day, that the plea of contract is an answer to all complaints; whilst the doctrine involved in the question, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" is repudiated altogether as inconsistent with the obligations of morality which bind us in the disposition of what is legally wholly under our control. Enough of these captious criticisms. Let them be so called. I have no pleasure in them. Their strength lies in the claim of flawless perfection which provokes them, and against which a single fault is fatal. Considered by themselves, they are insignificant: they are lost in the beauty and the loveliness which break through the narrative of acts and words contained in the Gospels. I despair of finding words to express

the feelings this revelation excites. The story is quite familiar to us. We supply the sentences beforehand as the reader proceeds. Yet it has happened—one knows not how—it will doubtless happen again—one cannot tell when—that, as the verses follow one another, suddenly out of the well-known story there comes a strange, thrilling sense of heights and depths never before scaled or plumbed. Something in the air, something in ourselves, something, it may be, in the voice of the reader, in sunny mornings, in country churches, when the scents and sounds of summer come through open windows, in the equable atmosphere of some vast minster, when the words spoken at the lectern are encompassed with stillness—under all varying circumstances, defying calculation and explanation,—the new comes out of the old, the passion out of the

commonplace, and we say within ourselves, "This thing is of God." The confession thus drawn from us in rare moments of exaltation does not require a belief in a complete and ever-abiding perfection, and is therefore strong enough not to be disturbed in after hours in view of suggestions of possible defects from perfection. A conception of the character of Christ seems to emerge more full of life and reality when thus approached. The Galilean peasant knew no science and little history; he accepted the learning and the institutions of his time; yet in God he lived and moved and had his being, the brightness of the Father's glory shone through him, and in the intensity of this indwelling and abiding light the world was transformed, humanity regenerated. Only when we pass from the confession that in him the brightness appeared to the de-

claration that he was that brightness, from the confession that he was of God to the declaration that he was God, some sense of some loss of reality supervenes. We are making the first step from the recognition of the divine Man full of life and of the power of life to that entity of the schoolmen which, as generations pass, becomes more and more a metaphysical conception in a theory of the universe having less and less relation with the passions, the struggles, the aspirations, and the failures of men.

The Abbé Loisy. Christ and the Church.

Whilst I was making the last entries in this diary, the newspapers, magazines, and reviews have been somewhat full of the Abbé Loisy, whose books have just been put on the Index at Rome. Upon this I have sent for what appears to be his most characteristic work,

L'Évangile et l'Église, and read it through. I speak with some hesitation as not having perhaps perfectly comprehended all his meaning; but, whilst I recognise the great interest of the book and the very effective criticism it contains, I cannot believe that it will induce many doubters to accept the Abbé's own position; and indeed the most devoted son of the Church must find a difficulty in maintaining it. The Abbé distinguishes between the Christ of history and the Christ of the Church. The Christ of history anticipated the installation of a Messianic kingdom within the lifetime of a generation. He was subject to all the defects of knowledge of his time. He was regarded by his disciples and followers as their Great Master and Wonder-worker, but never worshipped. He never organised a Church. The narratives of his

resurrection are full of inconsistencies that cannot be explained. It may be asked whether M. Loisy does not ascribe the imperfections which are apparent in the Christ of history to the inability of the historians to comprehend the fulness that was manifested in the flesh in Judæa, and not to any imperfect development in that manifestation; but I find no trace of this distinction in his book. The Christ of history has not, in his view, suffered from the shortcomings of historians. The development that has come in the Church required the fulness of time for its growth. According to the Abbé the Church, which by the necessary law of growth came into being after Christ's death and for ever demonstrates its claim to obedience by its existence, has developed the idea of Christ through successive generations, and must continue to

develop it. The fashion of the belief changes, and must change. It is adapted to different civilisations and to varying habits of thought. If the same words are used to express it to-day that were used eighteen hundred years ago, they may express, and often will express, altogether different conceptions. The Church enjoys something which might perhaps be described as an instantaneous infallibility in proclaiming the true meaning of the hour; and this is quite compatible with the fact that the belief of to-day is different from the belief of the Middle Ages, which again was different from the belief of the Apostles. The worship of the Virgin, the Invocation of Saints, the multiplication of Sacraments, take their places in the story of development, and indeed the number of Sacraments may in course of time grow to excess of the

mystic seven. All this may tend to glorify the Church in the heart of the true believer; but there is something to be said for the hesitation of the Holy Office in accepting it. The theory may provoke doubt instead of confirming assent. There is surely a simpler solution of the difficult problem of belief than this which is found in the vision of an infallible Church, the outcome of whose infallibility changes from generation to generation by some law of growth or expansion which we call development. Consider indeed the irony involved in the suggestion. What position does it assign to the unfortunate thinker who is banned to-day for anticipating the true doctrine of to-morrow. I find a sense in which I can accept much of M. Loisy's thought, but it is only by giving the word "Church" a meaning far outside his speculations. Let the Church stand not

merely for the Communion of Rome, but for all Christian Communions, nay, for all religions and all aspirations of man towards the Unseen — in a word, for all that fosters the spiritual education of the world—and we may say that the belief in God in man — the Christ—has developed, is developing, and cannot cease to develop through all ages. In this sense we are moving forward to an ideal that never has been realised and never will be realised, towards which we yet move. In this vision the machinery of Monsieur Loisy's thought seems to crumble away, and in the removal of the enveloping accretions which have been suffered to obscure the truth, the story of the past is made plain.

I HAVE *thus jotted down for two years or more some of the thoughts that have occurred to me in attending the services of the Church. I have confessed that they cannot be new. All have doubtless been thought before, and possibly all have been expressed; and yet I am bold to say that some of them are mine also, and not by recent possession. Though the occasions for their utterance may have been recent, many habitually dwell with me, and among them are old familiar friends known and cherished for many years. Yet even in their case the writing of this diary has been a service, for it has drawn me into a clearer acquaintance with what had been perhaps only half realised, whilst in other cases the resolution to explore the truth has dis-*

covered beliefs before scarcely suspected. I count this as a great gain to myself, as to one who has risen to a clearer and purer atmosphere, above the dust of the streets and the smoke of many habitations, and still further away from the poisonous mists of stagnant waters. The Scriptures shine forth full of new meaning when read with a free spirit. If the Psalmist and the Prophet become less mysterious, we are lifted into a plane of brotherhood with them, where their meditations and their warnings come home to us with an impulse and a power we had not known till we had been thus made free. The light of the Gospels flames afresh when the Central Figure is revealed in them walking with God, full-filled of God, and thus uplifted, drawing all men to himself, and to God through himself. As we are caught in this great illumination, the terror of death passes away and the message of redemption is completed. The glory

of the conviction is surely heightened and deepened by the thought that the drama of Judæa was not outside the constant course of history, violating its order in its origin and in its close, but was an exemplification for all humanity of what, though never reached in human history, was still the perfect ideal of humanity. There is peace, there is joy in believing, even though believing be in some directions a ceasing to believe; and I am glad, yea, right glad, to have attained this comfort. One question, however, arises. It may be asked, How can I continue to be, as I announce myself, a Churchgoer? Admitting only some fragmentary Articles of the Creeds, and discarding prayer after prayer as false to the true idea of the Kingdom of God, does not attendance at the appointed worship of the English Church become a mockery and the service of the sanctuary a sin? I am not free from doubt, and I wish I could see some easy

way of making it clear that I do not pretend to be that which I am not. Yet there is some vanity in this uneasiness, and I trust that my neighbours do understand something of my attitude, which, after all, is of the very slightest importance. I should be loth as a testimony to have to give up church-going. It is something to be able to withdraw now and then for an hour or so from the pettiness, the hurry, and the distraction of ordinary life. We go to church and we enter into an atmosphere of calm. The distilled wisdom of the ages is about us. The oldest narratives of human history are read in our hearing, and through all familiarity of phrase the sincerity of the narrator forces itself upon us. The sense that we are at one with the singers of countless generations is an uplifting. Paul's exhortations stimulate our courage. In the teaching and the passion of the Gospels we follow the way of perfect life which leads to

victory over death. All this may be possible in the closet. The sublimation of it may startle us as we walk along the streets. But the periodical withdrawal into these ancient houses of service, built with hands, helps us to dwell in houses not built with hands. Churches and chapels are, moreover, memorials of the family of man; and though there have been times, and they may come again, when it is necessary to quit the old and to build new temples, yet I for one feel that in these old meeting-houses, with all their imperfections of tradition and of use, I am more at home than in any others that are or seem likely to be accessible to me. So I remain a church-goer, though it may be that my proper place is in the outermost court of the Gentiles.

When I first began to set down my thoughts, I did so partly, and even largely, with a desire to give relief to

myself by arriving at a definite understanding of what I did believe, but partly also with the feeling that the record might be here and there of service to fellow-mortals stumbling along the same road towards the same end. Shall I try to fulfil this imagination? I think so. I know well the temptation to bury my thoughts in silence;—they are poor, they are commonplace, they are such as must pass through the mind of the most ordinary man moving in the stream of education of his generation; but they are not always expressed, they are not always even defined as they flit through the brain, and our private lives and our public life alike suffer from the indisposition we all feel to come out into the daylight. It is not lack of profundity but lack of sincerity that is most injuring us. I seem to see this in the building up of individual character and in every development of social and political action. To get men to follow

the guidance of a liberated spirit would be to renovate the world; and any man who steps forward may stimulate a neighbour to do the same. It may be said that I have gone too far for my own purpose. Instead of encouraging men forward, I shall frighten them back. I think not. I will not say that here and there a man may not be found who, never meaning to go forward, may plead that he is deterred by the prospect of the length he is invited to go. But the excuses of the timid are easy, and the illusory gain of such a man would be unwisely purchased by any abatement of sincerity. To faithful and honest folk I will speak faithfully and honestly, in the belief that the same light must lead us forwards.

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